



**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

*Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.*

**DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 051-5386**

**1. General Property Information**

Property name: Historical Armistead Stokalas Nickens Family Cemetery

Property address: 1632 Goodluck Road (north of)

City or Town: Kilmarnock, VA

Zip code: 22482

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Lancaster County, VA

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building  Site  Structure  Object

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: .25

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban  Suburban  Town  Village  Hamlet  Rural

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

**As per the Virginia Department of Historic Resources DHR Architectural Survey Form – ID – 051-5386:**

The cemetery is located on a wooded area on the northern side of an agricultural field - 10 observable marked graves. (one marking two interments) are present, as well as a large modern tablet inscribed "Nickens" in the center of the cemetery and small square granite corner markers bearing the initial "N". One interment is marked with a concrete vault cover (no plaque or inscription visible). Three are marked with temporary metal funeral home markers, one of which retains a partial insert with the name "Mrs. Louise Taylor" and the date "Feb. 13, 1941" visible. A Veterans Administration tablet marks the grave of Ellis Nickens Corbin, and the remaining seven are marked with low granite flush markers. There is currently a large tree that has fallen across the resting place and stones of some graves, one of which is the final resting place of the Honorable Armistead S. Nickens. Additional unmarked graves are visible as linear east/west depressions throughout this location. **Please feel free to additionally consult with VDHR Archaeologists: Joanna Wilson Green and Brad McDonald.**

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): \_\_\_\_\_

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

If the builder is known, please list here: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of construction (can be approximate): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):**

Briefly describe the property's general characteristics, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions or other major alterations.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- **Please see the VDHR Architectural Survey Form: ID-051-5386.**
- **Please also feel free to additionally consult with VDHR Archaeologists: Joanna Wilson Green and Brad McDonald regarding more specific details.**

#### 4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Honorable Armistead Stokolas Nickens Sacred Family Cemetery is eligible for listing in both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in African American history, religion, community development, and Reconstruction-era self-determination in Virginia's Northern Neck and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The cemetery is the resting place of the Honorable Armistead Stokolas Nickens. A descendant of Richard and Chriss, slaves who were freed by the will of John Carter in 1690, Armistead Stokolas Nickens was born free circa 1836 and was educated by his father. His parents were Armistead and Polly Weaver Nickens. Nickens had at least 12 ancestors who fought in the American Revolutionary War. His grandfather, Elijah Weaver, served as a seaman in the American Revolution.

On July 6, 1867, following the Civil War, African American members of Morattico Baptist Church requested dismissal from the congregation in order to establish their own church. On July 4, 1868, St. John's Baptist Church was formally organized as the first and oldest African American Baptist church in Lancaster County, and served as a spiritual, cultural, and social anchor for the free-born and newly emancipated African Americans during the Reconstruction Era. Along with the Founding Pastor of Old St. John's Baptist Church, Pastor Nelson Lee and other Church Officials, Armistead S. Nickens served as the church's first Treasurer.

Nickens was publicly elected in 1871 to represent Lancaster County in the Virginia House of Delegates. He publicly took the oath of office on December 6, 1871 and served for 2 terms until 1875. He was assigned to two committees: Militia & Police and Agriculture & Mining. During his tenure, he was an early advocate for building a bridge across the Rappahannock River connecting Tappahannock to Warsaw, VA. Although it did not pass until it was reintroduced years later, it is now known as the Downing Bridge. He advocated for all citizens in Lancaster. Following his career in the VA House of delegates, he donated land and built one of the first schools for African Americans in 1876 in Lancaster County.

He owned more than 150 acres of land, died in 1906 and is buried in the family cemetery overlooking the Kamps and Carters Millpond. On February 24, 1990, a Portrait of Nickens was donated by Great-granddaughter Brenda Campbell. The Presentation and Unveiling of the Portrait was formally accepted and received by the Order of the Circuit Court Judge Joseph E. Spruill, Jr. in commemoration at the Black Achievement Program. The portrait was hung in the foyer of the Lancaster County Circuit Court House. On April 25, 2019, at a Lancaster County Board of Supervisors meeting, it was recommended that the Portrait of The Honorable Armistead S. Nickens be moved into and currently hangs in the Board of Supervisors Meeting Room in the Lancaster Courthouse, Lancaster, VA. On September 29, 2022, the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors met and adopted a resolution, declared and proclaimed October 15, 2022 to be Armistead Stokolas Nickens Day to the citizens in Lancaster County, VA. On October 15, 2022, a Historical Highway Marker was erected to celebrate the local, regional and state-wide historical achievements of the Honorable Armistead S. Nickens and his lifetime achievements to education, public affairs and civic duties for all citizens. Nickens was additionally recognized with other African American Reconstruction Era State Legislators by the Commonwealth of VA, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission and the Library of VA. Per proceedings on February 23, 2024, Congressman Robert J. Wittman of VA House of Representatives, recognized the accomplishments of the Honorable Armistead Stokolas Nickens, as recorded and presented within U.S. Congressional Record of Recognition in Washington, D.C.

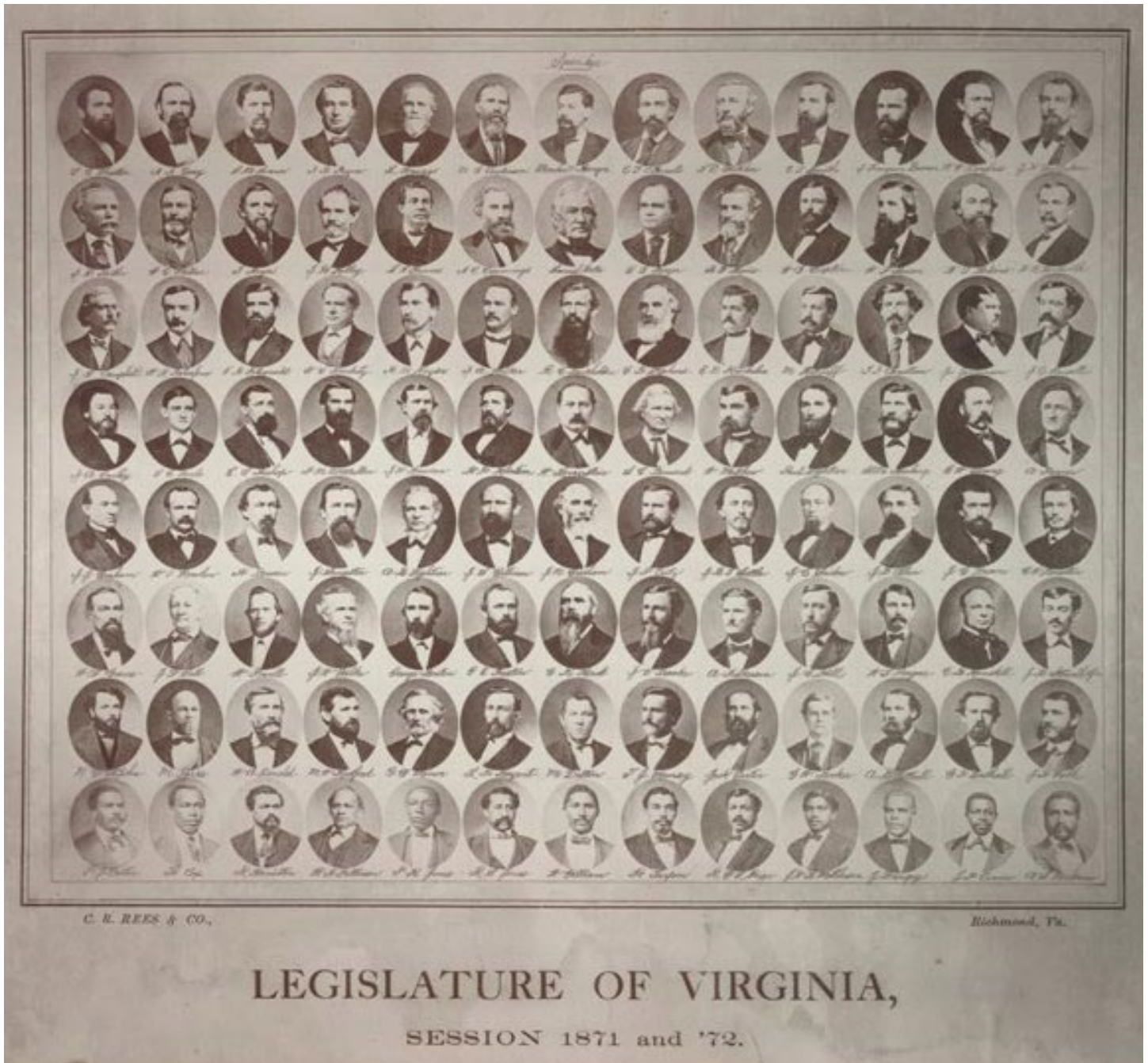
It is also the resting place of family member, William Mc Campbell. Per the Old St. John's Baptist Church minutes, William Mc Campbell, in 1868, when Old St. John's Baptist Church was organized, became the first Church Clerk, along with Founding Pastor, Nelson Lee and other Church Officials. In the early 1900's, Campbell and his son worked for Mr. Tapscott who operated a funeral home in Kilmarnock, VA. Established in 1919, Campbell and his son, Robert opened their own funeral service. They began with a horse drawn hearse, 2 commercial caskets and a promise of availability to purchase a hearse from Mr. Tapscott. They were the first African American undertakers in the Northern Neck until the 1980's. His son Quentin De Campbell joined the staff and was the first black licensed Embalmer and Funeral Director in the Northern Neck of Virginia while his sister, Ruby Campbell Morris assisted her brother in the family business. The family legacy of owning and operating the Campbell's Funeral Home in Kilmarnock VA continued to pass through the generations as, the late Rev. Brenda Elizabeth Campbell, Armistead S. Nickens, great-granddaughter and Quentin's daughter, became the first woman (African American or White) to be licensed as a Funeral Directress and Embalmer in the Northern Neck of VA. Currently Brenda's daughter, Robyne Fisher Jackson, of the fourth generation, continues to operate the Campbell Funeral Home throughout the Northern Neck of VA.

Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Please see the attached list of cited references in addition to the noted following resources:

- Deed
- Maps
- Morattico Baptist Church Minutes/ Ledger - Church Clerk – Excerpts 1866 - 1868 (Original located at the VA Baptist Historical Society, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA) <https://baptistheritage.org>
- Poll Book for Colored Voters, Kilmarnock, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Lancaster, County, VA, October 22, 1867
- VDHR Architectural Survey Assessment Report - DHR ID:051-0228
- Minutes from St. John's Baptist Church Minutes Book (Transcription located at the Lancaster VA Historical Society) <https://lancastervahistory.org>
- 2023: <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/nickens-armistead-s-1836-1906/>
- [https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2266955/nickens-family-cemetery-\(kilmarnock\)](https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2266955/nickens-family-cemetery-(kilmarnock))
- *Research Publications, Research Book, Articles, Photographs*



*~ The Honorable Armistead S. Nickens ~  
The Legislature of Virginia  
Virginia House of Delegates  
1871 ~ 1875  
The Circuit Court of Lancaster, Virginia*



*He Honorable Armistead Stokolas (S.) Nickens (lower right hand corner) served two terms. He was assigned to the Militia and Police Committee and the Agriculture and Mining Committee. Concerned about the travel from Lancaster County to Richmond, he advocated for and lobbied for bridge over the Rappahannock at Tappahannock, Virginia. During his tenure, no such legislature took place to build the bridge. Twenty-one years after his demise, The Downing Bridge was officially opened for traffic.*

**The Honorable Armistead S. Nickens****Lancaster County's Representative to Virginia's House of Delegates**

A descendant of Richard and Chriss, slaves who were freed by the will of John Carter in 1690, Armistead S. Nickens was born circa 1836. His parents were Armistead and Polly Weaver Nickens. His grandfather, Elijah Weaver, served as a seaman in the American Revolution.

Armistead's father taught him to read and write. Whenever he had the opportunity, young Armistead bought books and continued to study on his own. His father died before 1850, leaving his widow with two young sons, John and Armistead. It is likely that the boys had to go to work at a young age to help support the family. In the 1850 census, Polly was aged 50 and lived with the two boys. John, who was 16, was occupied as a laborer. Though the family owned no real estate, they were not identified as paupers. It is interesting to note that their next-door neighbor was Mahala Jones and her seven children, one of whom was 10-year-old Violet, who became Armistead's second wife.

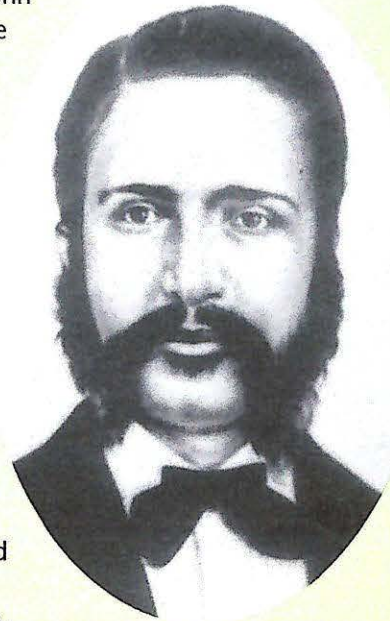
Holland Wood, also a free black, lived in Lancaster in 1850. He was a miller (and a Methodist minister) who owned \$100 worth of real estate. Five daughters lived with him in 1850, the second of whom was eight-year-old Sophronia. Holland's son, Charles C. Wood, was not then living at home.

By 1860, Armistead Nickens lived in Heathsville with Charles C. Wood who, like his father, was a miller. Armistead was 23 at the time, and was occupied as a sawyer. Soon afterward, Nickens married Sophronia Wood, daughter of Holland, and returned to Lancaster County. In 1869 or early 1870, Sophronia died. When the 1870 census was taken, Armistead lived in Lancaster with his mother, Polly, and his two children by Sophronia, five-year-old Holland A. Nickens and two-year-old Sarah.

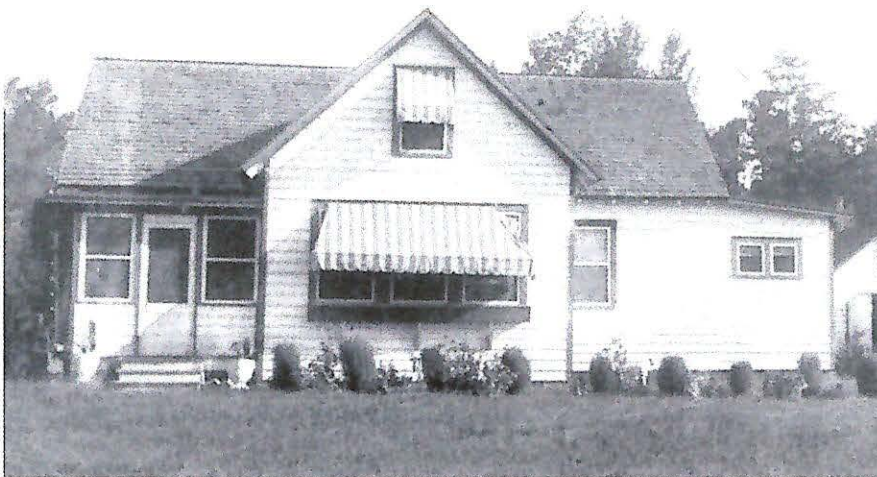
On November 14, 1871, Armistead Nickens married Violet Watkins, a 31-year-old widow, by whom he had three children: twins Joseph and Josephine, and daughter Sophronia. That year, Nickens was elected to represent Lancaster in the Virginia House of Delegates. He took the oath of office on December 6, 1871, Lancaster's first and only black representative. Although it did not pass until reintroduced many years later, Armistead Nickens introduced a bill for a bridge over the Rappahannock at Tappahannock. He served four years as delegate.

Armistead Nickens died in 1907, and is buried in the family cemetery overlooking the Kamps and Carters Millpond.

In 1990, a portrait of Armistead S. Nickens was presented to the Lancaster Court. It now hangs on the wall of the courtroom. Source: See Armistead Nickens genealogical file at Mary Ball Washington Library.




Armistead S. Nickens, a copy of the picture that hangs in the Lancaster County courthouse. [Photo by Maurice Duke, with permission of Clerk of Court]



In 1905, D. R. James, William M. Kirk, and W. A. Eubank, the White Stone district trustees of the School Board, purchased from Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Treakle an acre of land on which they built the Poplar Neck School. In 1927, the school was closed and the property was sold. Virginia Chase Humphreys purchased it for \$150. Her father-in-law, Captain Ocran Humphreys, remodeled the school building into a dwelling, pictured here. Mrs. Humphreys and her husband, Ocran Randolph Humphreys, lived there several years. [Photo courtesy of Rebecca Webb, who was born in the remodeled school. Information on chain of title from court records.]

**PIF BOUNDARY MAP**

Hon. Armistead Stokolas Nickens  
Family Cemetery  
Lancaster County, VA  
DHR ID# 051-5386


 Proposed Boundary

0 150  
 Feet



**PIF AERIAL-VICINITY MAP**

Hon. Armistead Stokolas Nickens  
Family Cemetery  
Lancaster County, VA  
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 Proposed Boundary

0  1,000 Feet

