

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Morton, Morton, House

other names/site number Mortonson, Morton, House; Morton, Morton and Lydia, House

2. Location

street & number Confluence of Muckinipates and Darby Creeks N/A  not for publication

city or town Norwood N/A  vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Delaware code 045 zip code 19074

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brent D. Sims Exec. Dir. 12/15/1999  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

Morton Morton House  
Name of Property

Delaware County, Pennsylvania  
County and State

**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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Museum

**7. Description**

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

Colonial/Georgian

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone  
walls Brick  
roof Wood/shingle  
other Wood

**Narrative Description**

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

(See 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.)

- 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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**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 # PA-1240
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

c.1750  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

c.1750  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Delaware County Historical Society

Morton Morton House  
Name of Property

Delaware County, Pennsylvania  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 5.5 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	8
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4	7	5	1	2	1
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4	4	1	4	3	3	3
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

4 

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 See continuation sheet

**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.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Margaret Westfield, Registered Architect and Sheila K. Koehler, Preservation Specialist

organization Westfield Architects & Preservation Consultants date 4/99; revised 7/99

street & number 425 White Horse Pike telephone (609) 547-0465

city or town Haddon Heights state NJ zip code 08035-1706

**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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Borough of Norwood

street & number 10 W. Cleveland Avenue telephone 610/586-5800

city or town Norwood state PA zip code 19074

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Morton Morton House  
Delaware County, Pennsylvania

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### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Morton Morton House, in the Borough of Norwood, is a c.1750 symmetrical, three-bay, two-story house with a gable roof and an attached two-bay, one-and-one-half story wing with a gambrel roof. The foundations of both the house and the wing are gneiss stone. The walls of both sections are brick, laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers on the south facade and irregularly coursed common bond on the other elevations. A moulded brick water table runs along the south (principal) facade of both the main house and the wing. String courses, two courses high, are located on the house on the south, west and north elevations at the second floor level above pent roofs and beneath the balcony on the south facade, as well as along the west and east elevations at the attic floor level above gable end pent roofs. The east wall of the wing is marked with the initials MM in glazed headers. Two interior end brick chimneys rise above the wood shingle roof of the house while a third is located on the interior east end of the wing. The interior of the house is a hall-parlor plan with Georgian paneling on the fireplace walls of the parlor and the bedrooms, as well as around the winder staircase. Large cooking fireplaces are located both in the hall and in the attached wing. The house underwent one period of expansion in 1845, when a third story was added to the main block and the half-story of the wing was converted to a full story with a gable roof. At that time the south door of the house was converted into a window and the north side windows were widened. The building subsequently underwent a restoration in 1971, during which time the house was restored to its pre-1845 appearance as determined from extensive physical evidence. The building is located on open park land sloping down to the confluence of the Muckinipates and Darby Creeks. The open lawn is surrounded by trees and underbrush to the west, north, and east. Across Darby Creek to the south is the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. The front facade of the house faces Darby Creek and the former location of the property's wharf. Archaeological excavations around the house indicate the presence at one time of formal gardens. The building is only in fair condition, due to an on-going problem with termite activity and minor water infiltration around the location of the balcony. The house, as restored in 1971, retains its integrity and reflects its period of significance.

The selection of the site of the house was most likely based on its nearness to Darby Creek, which provided a reliable method of transportation for goods and people, and the location of a spring on the property. The house was built over a well fed by the spring. The presentation of the front facade to the water indicates that the major approach to the house was via the creek. While the house is now surrounded by modern development, the visual intrusions are minimized by the surrounding vegetation on the property and the presence of the wildlife refuge, which protects the wetlands across the creek. The site, therefore, still reflects, to some degree, its appearance during the property's period of significance, although there was not enough remaining evidence to allow reconstruction of the formal gardens.

The four windows on the outer bays of the front facade of the c.1750 house are nine-over-six, single-hung sash, while the four corresponding narrower windows on the outer bays of the north elevation are four-over-four, single-hung sash. The window frames have ovolo mouldings on the exterior and are flat, with no evidence of applied mouldings, on the interior. The east and west elevations contain smaller windows, including two four-light fixed sash windows that admit light into closets on the north side of the west elevation and two four-over-two, single-hung sash windows,

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one in each gable end, that light the attic. The first floor of the wing is lit by one six-over-six single-hung sash on the east side of the south elevation and one four-over-four sash opposite it on the north elevation. Two four-over-two, single-hung sash roof dormers and a single-light casement window light the half-story in the wing. All of the basement windows have vertical wood bars and segmental arches over the openings.

The south facade of the house contains two doors in its center bay. One is at the first floor level and the other, which opens onto the balcony, is on the second floor. Another door is located in the center bay of the north elevation at the first floor level. The first floor doors, which are opposite each other across the west end of the hall, have four-light transoms. Similarly, the north and south elevation entrances to the wing are located opposite each other at the west end of the wing. Rather than transoms, however, the wing entrances have basket-handle arches. The exterior sides of all the doors are six-panel configurations, while the interior sides are vertical, bevel-edged boards. The frames are similar to the window frames, with ovolo mouldings on the exterior and no mouldings on the interior. The first floor house doors are approached by wood stoops with railings and side benches. The floor of the reconstructed balcony remains on the south facade, but the railing has been removed. Stone steps stand outside the wing doors. According to the archaeology, these steps appear to be an early twentieth-century feature. The bulkhead entrance is of the same stone as the foundation and has a temporary plywood door.

The interior of the main house is laid out in a hall-parlor plan with interior end chimneys and a winder stair in the southeast corner. The hall contains a large fireplace with an elaborate fireplace mantel and a paneled winder stair enclosure. The north side of the stair is enclosed with vertical boards rather than paneling. The hall is the only room in the main house with an open-joist ceiling. The parlor is differentiated from the hall by a more elaborate fireplace wall with full height paneling around the fireplace and over to the north wall, creating a closet on the north side of the fireplace. Although the fireplace mantel is similar to that in the hall, it differs slightly in profile. The parlor also has a moulded chairrail and a plaster ceiling.

The second floor contains two bedrooms. The west bedroom is paneled in the same manner as the parlor below, but lacks a chairrail. The east wall of the east bedroom is fully paneled, with closets to the north of the fireplace and the winder stair enclosure to the south. The profiles of the fireplace mantels also differ slightly from each other and from the first floor fireplaces. Again the north side of the winder stair enclosure is vertical boards. A small bathroom, containing a toilet and sink, has been added in the northwest corner of the east bedroom.

All rooms on both floors have random-width wood floors, a 3 3/4" high black base painted onto the walls, including the stairwell and woodwork, and interior doors with a five-panel configuration and H and HL hinges. The door frames also have ovolo mouldings on one side and are flat on the other. All fireplace hearths, including the floor of the fireplace support in the cellar, are paved with square brick pavers.

The first floor of the wing has an open-joist ceiling and a large, long fireplace to the north of a paneled winder stair enclosure along the east wall. The second floor of the wing, which served as a

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caretaker's apartment, has all modern finishes. The space was divided into a bathroom in the northwest corner, with a kitchenette along the opposite side of the north-south wall of the bathroom, and living and dining areas.

In the mid-nineteenth century, circa 1845, the roofs of both the main house and the wing were raised. The main house became a three-story structure with a gable roof re-using the original rafters. The pents and balcony were removed. The wing became a two-story, gable-roofed structure and its south wall may have collapsed and been rebuilt during the same period. Substantial evidence as to the original two-story exterior of the house, however, remained in the historic fabric and its interior remained completely intact. During the mid-twentieth century, the house was vacant and suffered from vandalism. Beginning in 1968, historic architect John Dickey and archaeologist Mary Butler from the University Museum headed a team that performed painstaking archival, architectural, and archaeological research over a period of more than a year to guide the restoration of the Morton Morton House. As a result, they returned the house to its pre-1845 appearance, repairing the damage caused by vandals, retaining all possible historic fabric, and basing all reconstructed materials on extensive historic and archaeological documentation. The house's isolated location had made it attractive to vandals before the restoration. In order to prevent future problems, it was agreed that the second floor of the wing, where no original fabric except the east wall remained, would be converted into a caretaker's apartment. It was also at this time that the bathroom was inserted into the east bedroom.

The 1971 restoration in effect preserved the historic integrity of the building by preserving its character-defining elements, including: the symmetrical facade with Flemish bond brick, nine-over-six windows, six-panel doors, pent roofs, and balcony; the hall-parlor plan; the wide plank pine flooring; the paneling, plaster, and painted base; the open-joint ceiling in the hall; the fireplaces with their mantels and paved hearths; and the winder stair. The combination of these elements places the house in the early-to-mid-Georgian period and shows a combination of Colonial and Georgian elements.

Many of these items existed either fully or partially intact. The front facade of the main block existed intact, with the exception of the conversion of the doors into windows. The oak door frames remained in the wall. The exterior doors did not survive, but many interior doors did. The replacement exterior doors were based on the interior doors and examples from similar houses. The nine-over-six window sash were no longer extant. The replacement sash were based on evidence at contemporary eighteenth-century sites in the Delaware Valley, including Graeme Park c.1722, James and Ann Whitall House 1748, Marks-Dunbar House 1758, and Cedar Grove c.1720s. The poplar window frames remained in the wall. They were re-used where possible and replaced in-kind where too deteriorated for re-use, replicating all details, including the lack of interior mouldings.

Some exterior elements were, in part, conjectural restorations. These include the stoops, the balcony, the pent roofs, and the arches over the wing doors. Evidence for each of these elements existed within the remaining fabric and the exact details were developed through study of other houses in the area of the same period, particularly Bel Air, in Philadelphia. The remaining physical evidence for

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the balcony was the dropped belt course, the spacing of the floor joists, and holes cut into the walls for the railing and diagonal bracing.

The wing had undergone more extensive changes than the main block. In addition to its conversion to a two-story gable-roof structure, the south wall apparently collapsed c.1845, prior to the wing's conversion to a two-story structure, and the wing was partially demolished by a falling tree during the mid-twentieth century. Only the east wall with its large chimney and fireplace mass survived. As less physical evidence remained, the restoration was based on an exhaustive architectural and archaeological investigation. The architect and the archaeologist developed different theories regarding the evolution of the wing, and the architect proceeded with the restoration of the wing to the configuration supported by the most physical evidence. On the interior, a caretaker's apartment was created in the upper level, as no historic fabric remained in that area. The loft is not on public display and is not an element that can be seen from the exterior. The other alteration made by the restoration architect was the insertion of a bathroom in the east room on the second floor. The bathroom consists of two partition walls, a vinyl tile floor laid over the wood floor, a sink, a toilet, and a chase for pipes.

The floor plan of the house was altered only by later partition walls in the hall and the bedroom above. The first floor partition walls were no longer extant by the time of the restoration but the presence of early paint layers on the plaster where the partition wall would have abutted it indicated that the walls were not original. The second floor partition wall, which was identified during the architectural investigation as early twentieth-century, was removed. The original structure of the main block was intact with the exception of some damage to the brick partition wall between the two bedrooms. In addition, due to deterioration, it was necessary to sister many of the oak joists. The joists were not removed. The original floor was repaired and patched. The plaster and painted base remained in some, but not all, areas. Restoration of missing plaster was based on constituent analysis. The height and color (black) of the base were replicated on the new plaster and woodwork and on areas that had been painted over. The poplar paneling and the chairrail remained and although the paneling had been damaged by vandals, it was salvaged by the restoration architect and re-assembled where possible and replaced in-kind where it was too damaged to reinstall. Most of the paneling had only one or two layers of paint over the original finish coat. The original primer coat was Spanish brown (Munsell Color 7.5R 3/4) and the first finish coat was medium grey (Munsell Color 10Y 4/1). The paneling is currently painted the color of the primer. The open-joist ceiling in the hall only needed paint removal. The fireplace mantels remained, with the exception of the hall mantel. The profile of the moulding beneath the hall mantel shelf was preserved, however, by later plaster layers on the north wall, enabling the restoration architect to recreate it. The hearth pavers were discovered through archaeology and were re-used and replaced in-kind. The winder stair remained intact and had only to be repaired during the restoration.

The original roof configuration and slope was easily restored because the original slope of the roof was outlined in glazed headers on the east wall and the change in the brick between the two periods was easily discernible. In addition, the original rafters had been flipped over and re-used for the new roof. These members were scheduled to be re-used where possible. The size of the original wood shingles was determined from the lath nail marks on the rafters. The historic fabric of the Morton



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Morton House, although subject to neglect and vandalism, was not significantly altered by later alterations and the restoration was far more sensitive than many done during the same period. The guiding philosophy of the restoration was to preserve all existing historic fabric and to repair where possible and replace in-kind only when necessary.

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### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Morton Morton House, built c.1750, meets National Register Criterion C by embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Colonial/Georgian period. It illustrates the impact of the Georgian style on traditional architectural practices in southeastern Pennsylvania with its symmetrical, Flemish-bond brick facade superimposed on the traditional hall-parlor plan common to the area, as well as the use of paneling with bolection moldings on the interior contrasting with the use of the old-fashioned winder stair. The choice of brick over stone as the building material was a regional preference, while the choice of Flemish bond represents an overlap between the Georgian style and a local building type subset, the patterned-brick house, which also employed Flemish bond.

The land along the Delaware was hotly contested property throughout the seventeenth century. It was first claimed by the Dutch on the basis of its exploration by Henry Hudson. The Dutch failed to settle it, however, and the Swedish established the first colony in the area. The Dutch, under Peter Stuyvesant, took the land from the Swedish in 1651, only to be routed by the Swedish in 1654. It is believed that Morton Mortonson, Sr. arrived with the 1654 Swedish expedition. The land was retaken by the Dutch in 1655, in whose possession it remained until it was seized by the English in 1664. Neither the Dutch nor the English, however, took land away from the individual land owners, including Morton Mortonson, Sr.<sup>1</sup>

The property on which the Morton Morton House now stands was patented to Morton Mortonson, Sr. and John Cornelius in 1672.<sup>2</sup> Mortonson later bought Cornelius' land from Cornelius' son, Andrew Johnson. The Swedish and Finnish type log house Mortonson built in 1654, known as the Morton Homestead, remains a short distance down Darby Creek from the Morton Morton House in Prospect Park, Delaware County. A second house was built in a similar manner nearby in 1698 and the two were connected by stone infill walls and a single roof in the 1790s. This building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is owned and maintained by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

In 1703, Mortonson, Sr. divided his land among his sons. Andrew Mortonson (sometimes called Andrew Sr. or Andrew of Muckanipot to distinguish him from two nephews of the same name) received the land at the confluence of Darby Creek and Muckinipates Creek.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Mortonson, Sr. died intestate in 1722, leaving a wife and five daughters. The property was subsequently divided among the daughters.<sup>4</sup> The youngest daughter, Lydia, apparently inherited the land on which the Morton Morton House would later be built. Sometime between 1734 and 1741, Lydia married Morton Morton. Morton Morton was the son of Andrew Mortonson, nephew to Andrew Mortonson, Sr. Therefore, Lydia and Morton were first-cousins-once-removed. Through a series of transactions among Lydia and her sisters, Morton and Lydia eventually owned much of Andrew Mortonson, Sr.'s original property, in addition to other property Morton acquired over time in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Morton Morton's name first appears in Ridley Township tax records in 1739, for six shillings. His tax remains approximately the same through the records that are available for the following decade until 1749, when his taxes went up to 13 shillings, possibly reflecting the construction of the house. Morton Morton was, at one time, the largest tax payer in Ridley Township.<sup>5</sup> Morton and Lydia had

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three children, Andrew, Margaret and Rebecca. Lydia died in 1756 and Morton married Mary Boon in 1758. Morton's daughter Rebecca married William Boon in 1764. In 1768, Rebecca and William Boon mortgaged the property to Mary Parker Norris. The mortgage mentions a "brick tenement or messuage at the confluence of the Muckinipates and Darby Creeks," thus establishing that the Morton Morton House had been built by 1768.<sup>6</sup> When Morton Morton died in 1781, he divided his property in Pennsylvania between his granddaughters, Lydia and Elizabeth Boon, children of his only surviving child, Rebecca (Morton) Boon.<sup>7</sup> Through a series of deaths without issue, all of Morton Morton's Pennsylvania property eventually devolved upon his great-granddaughter, Rebecca Boon Hall, daughter of Elizabeth (Boon) Hall. Rebecca B. Hall later married George Gesner. Upon her death, her property was divided among her four sons.<sup>8</sup>

J. Washington Gesner inherited the property with the Morton Morton House on it from his mother, Rebecca B. (Hall) Gesner. J. Washington Gesner owned the property until 1873, when it was sold to Charles D. McClees.<sup>9</sup> The property then changed hands repeatedly through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until it was finally deeded over to the Borough in 1954 when it was threatened by development.<sup>10</sup> Throughout its existence, the house was used as a single-family domestic dwelling until it was turned over to the Borough. It then served briefly as a boathouse for a local boys club before standing vacant for more than a decade. After its restoration in 1971, the house was used as a house museum until it was closed in 1997 due to termite infestation.

The hall-parlor plan, together with the symmetrical Georgian exterior and the bolection moldings on the interior, indicate that the main block of the house was built c.1740. This conclusion is supported by the change in Morton Morton's tax bill in 1749 and the range of the dates of the artifacts found during archaeological excavations (1750-1950) with a heavy proportion of late eighteenth-century sherds. Prior to the 1969 investigations by the architect and archaeologist, it was thought that the house was a seventeenth century building and that the kitchen wing might be the original, older structure. Archaeology revealed the presence of possible trash pits under the kitchen wing along the east wall of the house and that the foundations of the kitchen wing abut those of the house rather than tying into them. There was no archaeological evidence for a fourth wall of the kitchen wing to support the theory that the wing was an earlier structure that had been altered to connect to the house. This evidence fairly conclusively proved that the house was built first and the kitchen wing was either contemporaneous with the house or was built soon thereafter.<sup>11</sup> The use of the initials MM indicates that the wing was built during Morton Morton's occupation of the house. The initials MM are also found scratched into a glazed header (beneath the glaze) on the south facade of the main house.

Early Colonial building practices were influenced by a complex set of circumstances. The settlers' building traditions were based on the climate from which they came and on the available building materials of their native regions. Once in America, the building practices had to be modified to accommodate the new climate in which the settlers found themselves as well as the wealth or dearth of building materials similar to those they used in the Old World. The different traditions from which they came and the differing circumstances of their new environment resulted in a variety of building styles, floor plans, construction methods and materials.<sup>12</sup>

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A common floor plan in vernacular houses of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries is the hall-parlor plan. This floor plan accommodated the majority of daily activity in one large room, while the second room served as a formal room, and often a bedroom as well. Another element common to seventeenth and eighteenth century houses is the winder stair. Straight runs of stair did not become common, especially in middle or lower class houses, until much later in the eighteenth century.

While some elements were common to many types of Colonial houses, others were more defined by region. Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker noted that if a line were drawn from Princeton, New Jersey to Wilmington, Delaware, that to the east of the line, in Philadelphia, on both banks of the Delaware, and in southern New Jersey, the Colonial houses are generally brick, while those to the west are generally stone.<sup>13</sup> One interesting subset of the brick house is the patterned-brick house, most common in southern New Jersey, across the Delaware River from the Morton Morton House. The patterned-brick houses are usually tall, narrow houses with steep gable roofs and Flemish bond walls that feature diaper patterns on blind gable-end walls, often in combination with the construction date and owners initials set in glazed headers.<sup>14</sup> The wing of the Morton Morton House shows the influence of this practice.

During the eighteenth century, a trend toward emulation of the English culture developed, following the growing dominance of the English over other European countries in the American colonies. In 1682, Pennsylvania was given to William Penn by Charter signed by King Charles II. The greatest number of immigrants to the area after that time came from the British Isles. Another event that influenced this trend was the enforcement of the Navigation Acts by the English, which prevented the colonies from legally trading with any country but England.<sup>15</sup>

A major representation of this emulation of English culture was the widespread adaptation of the Georgian style. The Georgian style, named for the English monarchs, spanned the eighteenth century, and showed the influence first of Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren and later of James Gibbs and the Neo-Palladio movement. The dissemination of this style was achieved not only through travel and commerce between the colonies and England generally, but specifically through the architectural treatises that began to circulate, notably Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture*, William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones*, and Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*.<sup>16</sup>

The Georgian style is characterized by a number of elements, including: symmetry of both plan and facade; the use of a central hall; the division of the house into horizontal elements through the use of low hipped roofs, string courses, strong cornices, water tables, and balustrades; a proportional relationship among elements; and the use of classical elements for ornamentation, such as pilasters and pediments.<sup>17</sup> In the American colonies, certain other elements also became associated with the Georgian style, such as transoms, six-panel doors, and multi-light windows, ranging from twelve-over-twelve light sash with small panes when glass was an expensive commodity to six-over-six light sash as people became able to afford larger panes.

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While there are many wonderful textbook examples of high style Georgian architecture, and other high style examples that exhibit a few quirks, most of the buildings built during the eighteenth century were more prosaic structures that exhibit both the continued building traditions of the local area and the new influence of the Georgian style. The Morton Morton House represents the building traditions of the middle class during the eighteenth century, incorporating both existing local traditions and the Georgian influence. The house, which is the only extant eighteenth-century house in Norwood Borough, has a hall-parlor plan with a winder staircase in the southeastern corner, elements lingering from seventeenth-century building practices. On the exterior, its brickwork is Flemish bond, a pattern associated both with older brick houses and with the newer Georgian style. The use of the initials MM in glazed headers references the nearby New Jersey patterned-brick houses across the Delaware River. The exterior clearly shows the influence of the Georgian style in the symmetrical facade, the nine-over-six single-hung sash windows, the six-panel doors with transoms, string courses, the water table, and the overall horizontal impression of the house. This impression of horizontality is strengthened by the use of pent roofs, a building element most commonly associated with the greater Philadelphia area. The Georgian influence is also clear on the interior in the full-height wall paneling on the fireplace walls and the Georgian mouldings of the fireplace surrounds. The Morton Morton House is significant for its illustration of the impact of the Georgian style on local vernacular architecture in the eighteenth-century.

Other examples of eighteenth-century structures in the area also bear the characteristics of both the local vernacular building tradition and the new Georgian style. Buildings with similarities to the Morton Morton House include the Barns-Brinton House in Pennsbury Township, Chester County, Bel Air in Philadelphia, and the Griffith Morgan Homestead in Pennsauken, New Jersey. Two other houses, the 1704 house near Dilworthtown in Delaware County and Abel Nicholson House in Salem, New Jersey, represent some of the existing local traditions incorporated into the Morton Morton House.

The 1704 house is a two-story, irregularly-coursed stone structure, Although it is three-bays wide, it is not symmetrical. In addition, the original windows, which have been replicated, were diamond-pane leaded-glass casements. The only common exterior elements the houses share are the gable roof, the gable-end pent roofs between the second and third floors, and the front elevation pent roof between the first and second floors. On the interior, however, it does share the hall-parlor plan.<sup>18</sup>

The Abel Nicholson House bears a closer architectural relationship to the Morton Morton House. The Abel Nicholson House, built in 1722, is a two-story, New Jersey patterned-brick house, with walls laid in Flemish bond on the north, south, and west sides, while the east side was laid with a diaper design and the date 1722 in glazed headers. The facade is symmetrical, although it lacks a center window on the second floor, with twelve-over-eight sash on the first floor and eight-over-eight sash on the second. Like the Morton Morton House it had pent roofs across the long elevations and interior end chimneys. On the interior, the Abel Nicholson house has a hall-parlor plan, a winder staircase, and Georgian paneling. The hall fireplace mantel is also similar in style and moulding profiles to those in the Morton Morton House. Unlike the Morton Morton House and most other Georgian style houses, however, the Abel Nicholson house gives an overall impression of being tall and narrow, sitting high on a partially raised basement with a steep gable roof, contrary to the Georgian emphasis of horizontality. In *New Jersey Architecture*, the origins of this regional type are ascribed to a combination

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of influences, including the building tradition brought to the area by the English Quaker settlers, the clay soil in the area which was suited to making brick, and symmetry inspired by the Georgian style.<sup>19</sup>

The Barns-Brinton House, built c.1720, exhibits many characteristics similar to those of the Morton Morton House. Like the Morton Morton House, it is a two-story brick structure with Flemish bond on the front facade and common bond elsewhere. While the Morton Morton House displays the initials MM in glazed headers on the wing, the Barns-Brinton House has a diaper pattern in the west gable end. The front facade is symmetrical and it has a brick watertable over a stone foundation, wood stoops, pent roofs, small gable end windows with segmental arches, a gable roof with the lower slope characteristic of Georgian architecture, and interior end chimneys. The two primary exterior differences are the windows, which are diamond-pane leaded-glass casements, and the lack of a balcony and second story door on the main facade. On the interior, the Barns-Brinton House also has a hall-parlor plan, but it has two winder stairs because the house was initially a tavern and the second floor public and private rooms were not connected. Some of the paneling on the interior is also similar, especially in the parlor and west bedroom. The parlor fireplace mantel is similar, as are the three-panel closet doors and the five panel stair doors.<sup>20</sup>

Another house comparable to the Morton Morton House from the same general period of construction is Bel Air, also written Bellaire, in Philadelphia. This house, constructed c. 1720 and remodeled on the interior c.1735, has several elements in common with the Morton Morton House, although it is built on a grander scale. The Flemish bond brick structure has a symmetrical five-bay facade with a brick watertable over a stone foundation and basement windows with basket-handle arches. The nine-over-nine sash windows flank a six-panel, double-leaf door with a transom beneath a balcony. The narrower door on the second floor is also six-panel with a transom. Bel Air has a string course between the first and second floors, but no pent roofs at this level. There are pent roofs at the gable ends between the second floor and attic. Elements that show Bel Air to have been constructed in a higher style include the use of Flemish bond on all four sides, the plaster cove cornice, the door hood over the second floor door, and the gabled roof dormers. On the interior, the house has a full, single-pile Georgian plan with two rooms on either side of a center hall and a half-turn stair. The paneling, however, is still similar to that in the Morton Morton House, but is more complicated and more extensive than that at the Morton Morton House.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the Griffith Morgan Homestead, also known as the Alexander Morgan House, is a c.1720 stone and brick structure that has a three-bay, symmetrical facade, with the exception of the basement windows, which are slightly off-center.<sup>22</sup> While the main facade is stone and the others are brick, the other conventions noted at the Morton Morton House are observed, including nine-over-nine windows, pent roofs, and a balcony and second floor door. Unlike the Morton Morton House, the roof is gambrel and has two gabled dormers. On the interior, the house has a hall-parlor plan on the first floor with a winder staircase in one corner of the hall. Rather than having two interior end chimneys, one chimney is set in a corner, creating corner fireplaces in the parlor and one bedroom. The exact configuration of the second floor has been debated. Other period houses with second floor balconies include the Square Tavern in Newtown Square, and Stenton and Grumblethorpe, both in Germantown, Philadelphia.

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Each of the houses described above, from the Morton Morton House to the Griffith Morgan Homestead is a link in the chain of the architectural evolution that took place during the eighteenth century. Each is slightly different, representing various functions or levels of wealth. Each incorporates different elements from the local and regional building traditions as well as from the Georgian style that was being disseminated throughout the American colonies. The Morton Morton House was that of a landowner, rather than a tavern keeper, but not that of a very wealthy man. Its architectural significance lies in its place in the architectural spectrum created by the transitions taking place during the course of the eighteenth century. Without each of the examples described above, our understanding of this important architectural movement would be incomplete.

### Endnotes

1. Margaret Berwind Schiffer, *Survey of Chester County, Pennsylvania Architecture: 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Exton, Pa: Schiffer Publishing, 1976): 3-4; William D. Foster, "New Castle, Delaware: An Eighteenth-Century Town" in *Colonial Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic*, ed. Lisa C. Mullins (Harrisburg, Pa: The National Historical Society, 1987): 143; Herbert C. Wise, "The George Read II House at New Castle, Delaware" in *Colonial Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic*, ed. Lisa C. Mullins (Harrisburg, Pa: The National Historical Society, 1987): 165; Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, Icon Editions, 1979): 28.
2. Patent from Governor Lovelace to Morton Mortonson, Eschalcan (copy), Chester County Courthouse.
3. 1703 Property Division: Andrew Morton to Mathew Morton, Chester County Courthouse.
4. 1722 Deed of Partition: to Estate of Andrew Morton.
5. Ridley Township Tax Records: 1739, 1740, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1751.
6. Mortgage, Rebecca and William Boone, 1768, Chester County Courthouse.
7. Will of Morton Morton, March 15, 1781, proven July 19, 1781, Chester County Will Book F, vol. 6 p. 411.
8. Will of Rebecca Gesner, April 2, 1863, proven, July 19, 1869, Philadelphia Will Book 65 p.277 &c.
9. Deed, J. Washington Gesner and Elizabeth H., his wife, to Charles D. McClees, March 22, 1873, Deed Book K-3, p.273.
10. Deed, Cora E. Milligan to the Borough of Norwood, May 28, 1954, Deed Book 1733 p.116.

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11. John Dickey and Mary Butler, Architectural and Archaeological Reports on the Morton Morton House, October 1968 through May 1970, Norwood Borough.

Extensive archaeological and architectural investigations revealed what the architect and archaeologist felt to be conflicting clues as to the date and configuration of the wing construction. While both were satisfied that the construction of the wing did not pre-date the house, two theories were advanced regarding its physical relationship to the main block which affect its assumed date of construction. John Dickey believed that the wing was built at the same time as the house in the one-story, gambrel-roof, attached configuration seen in the current photographs. This contention is based on the following: a) an apparent arch spring and the use of glazed brick headers on the first floor southeast corner of the main block (rather than the non-glazed quoining found on the second floor southeast corner and both floors of the southwest corner), indicating to him that a door was built at that location; b) the existence of an interior type door and frame with the full interior paint sequence in the east wall of the main block; c) the use of soft salmon brick on the lower east wall of the Main House; d) lack of window opening traces in this wall; e) a lack of archaeological evidence regarding any wing foundations other than the existing three walls; f) the outline of the gambrel roof on the east wall of the wing; g) a lack of any archaeological artifacts pre-dating those around the Main House.

Dickey also believed that a localized catastrophe, such as a flood and resulting collapse of the south wall of the wing accounted for the inferior quality of the workmanship on the south wall of the wing. This idea is supported by archaeological evidence. Although Dickey does not number the following two points among his arguments, it should be noted that the mortar found in the main block and in undisturbed portions of the north and east walls of the wing match and that there is no evidence of a string course or pent roof along the east wall, suggesting that another structure abutted it from the date of its construction.

Mary Butler, the archaeologist, felt that the wing may have been later than the house and that it originally may have been connected to the house by a breezeway when it was built. Her main points include: a) the presence of probable trash pits along the east side of the main block indicating the presence of a work yard; b) the fact that the wing foundations abut those of the house with evidence that the main house corner foundation stones were chipped away for insertion of the wing foundation stones; c) the appearance of a builder's trench in the northeast corner of the wing with artifacts dating from 1760-1850, suggesting that filling in the pit was part of the building of the wing or the enclosing of the breezeway; d) the fact that the 1798 glass tax lists a brick summer kitchen under outbuildings and the overall length of the two buildings is 4' shorter than their combined length today (accounted for by the breezeway now being enclosed); e) the lack of a gambrel roof outline on the east wall of the main block (the outline of the nineteenth century two-story configuration is visible); and f) evidence of different floor levels between the house and wing.

12. Roth: 28-29; Helen Schwartz, *The New Jersey House* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983): 31-32.



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13. Schiffer: 4.
14. Schwartz: 32.
15. Roth: 28-29.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Roth: 32.
18. Patricia Heintzelman, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory — Nomination Form: 1704 House" September 18, 1975, Section 7.
19. Susanne C. Hand, *New Jersey Architecture* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1995): 27-29.
20. Eleanor M. Webster, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory — Nomination Form: Barns-Brinton House" April 5, 1970, Section 7; Schiffer: 24-25, 381.
21. Historic American Buildings Survey, "Bel Air" 1932: 30 drawing sheets.
22. Until 1990, the Griffith Morgan Homestead was erroneously dated to c.1693. However, research sponsored by the Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission in that year, indicated that the standing structure was built by Alexander Morgan c.1720 as an addition to the original building, which is no longer extant. Margaret Westfield and Ed Fox, National Register of Historic Places Inventory — Nomination Form Amendment: Griffith Morgan House, December 1990, pp.8-1 through 9-2.

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## **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Beginning at the point where the Muckinipates Creek meets the Darby Creek, 50' due east of the western confluence of the shores and from that point 379.8' S57° 27'W and hence 378.5' S59° 29'W and hence 378.5' S59° 29'W and hence 313.5' N12° 05'W and hence 591.7' N 42° 29'E to the point of beginning, comprising 5.5 acres as delineated on the attached tax map of Darby Borough.

## **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

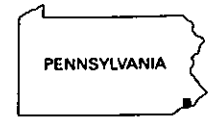
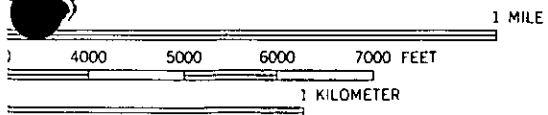
Although historically the house was surrounded by hundreds of acres owned by Morton Morton, most of the land has been developed into present-day Norwood Borough. The boundary includes the remaining undeveloped land immediately associated with the house.



Morton Morton House  
 Delaware County, PA  
 UTM Reference  
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PORT) / SE 474 ESSINGTON 0.9 MI. 17'30" 6 MI. TO PA 420 4761 WILMINGTON, DEL. 17 MI.

291 INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1994 478000m.E 75° 15' 39° 52' 30"



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

- ROAD CLASSIFICATION**
- Primary highway, hard surface \_\_\_\_\_
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  - Light-duty road, hard or improved surface \_\_\_\_\_
  - Unimproved road \_\_\_\_\_
  - Interstate Route (circle with number)
  - U. S. Route (rectangle with number)
  - State Route (circle with number)

VAL 10 FEET  
 TICAL DATUM OF 1929

AL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 OLOGICAL SURVEY  
 R RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1990 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1994  
 Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours  
 Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

**LANSDOWNE, PA.**  
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