

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Paw Paw Black School

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 149 North Amelia Street

City or town: Paw Paw State: WV County: Morgan

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

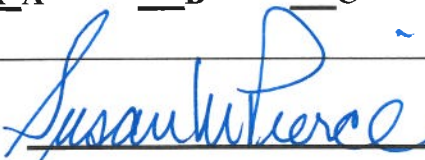
In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following

level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	<u>6/18/24</u> Date
Signature of certifying official/Title:	
<u>West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Arts, Culture and History</u> Title:	
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	
Date	
Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/ Collegiate Gothic

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: concrete; Walls: brick; Roof: metal/torchdown

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

Located in Paw Paw, Morgan County, WV the former Paw Paw Black School is a simple Collegiate Gothic Revival style building. There is modest ornamentation on the facade in the form of decorative cast concrete “stone” blocks on the entry vestibule, as well as a simple rectangle design done in brick above the arched entry. The parapet walls are capped in cast concrete and have two “crenelations” on the front facade of each wing. The structure is brick faced over hollow ribbed terracotta blocks built on a raised concrete foundation. There is a small basement under a third of the building accessed from the north side of the building. The building is situated on a quiet residential street several blocks from the Potomac River on a trapezoidal-shaped lot with about 100’ of frontage on N. Amelia St. The building sits above street level with a concrete retaining wall along a portion of the front of the property and is reached by a series of steps. The front facade with a center vestibule faces west. Centered at the rear of the building is a bumpout that contained the students’ washrooms and closets. The Paw Paw Black School retains its historic integrity as it relates to Criterion A.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Narrative Description

Paw Paw, in Morgan County, is located along the Potomac River in an area known as the Paw Paw Bends. The Paw Paw Valley is surrounded by the ridges of Sideling Hill, Green Ridge, Purslane Mountain, and Town Hill.

The building is located approximately a half mile southwest of the intersection of Winchester Street and Henry Miller Highway (West Virginia Route 9). It sits on a small 0.19 acre sloping lot bordered by N. Amelia Street to the west, a residential lot with a late 1800s "I-House" to the south, a modern multi-story apartment complex to the east (on the site of a former school constructed in 1913 for white students), and a vacant lot to the north (formerly the location of the "Blue Hall" African-American music club). The immediate area is a mix of older single-family homes, vacant lots and recent infill.

The entrance faces west and is reached by a concrete walkway extending to N. Amelia Street. Several concrete steps lead up from the walkway to the vestibule. At the back of the building abutting the north property line is a non-contributing shed that dates from outside the period of significance. It is located roughly where a coal shed once stood.

Exterior

The former Black School is a one-story building of red brick in a running bond over hollow ribbed terracotta blocks¹ on a raised concrete foundation with a partial basement. The flat roof, while originally covered in hot tar/asphalt, is now a mix of metal and torchdown roofing. The front facade (photo 1) faces west and is divided into equal wings with a protruding arched entry vestibule at the center serving both classrooms. There is modest ornamentation on the facade in the form of decorative cast concrete "stone" blocks on the entry vestibule, as well as a simple rectangle design done in brick above the arched entry (photo 2). The parapet walls are capped in cast concrete and have two "crenelations" on the front facade of each wing. Each wing (classroom) has their own entry door (photo 3), and originally had a large area of fenestration comprised of five double hung windows in a six over six arrangement. At some point those windows degraded to such degree they had to be removed and the areas were framed in and enclosed with vinyl siding and standard residential double hung vinyl windows. The south elevation (photo 4) is devoid of any ornamentation or fenestration. The east (back) side of the building (photo 5) has small bumpout that originally served as the school's washrooms and student closets. The north elevation (Photo 6) is identical to the south elevation except for a doorway providing access to the basement (Photo 10).

¹ It is somewhat surprising to see an exterior of brick veneer placed over the hollow ribbed terracotta blocks given the added expense of the brick and labor to install it. Several buildings in and around Paw Paw are built with the terracotta exposed and serving as the exterior finish.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Interior

The building was originally comprised of two rooms separated by a movable partition with the small shared bumpout at the rear of the building for the washrooms and student closets. The original interior finish was plaster over ribbed terracotta block with wooden wainscoting on the lower portion of the walls. Initially each classroom was heated by individual woodstoves, which were eventually replaced by a coal furnace in the basement. The interior has been significantly modified over the years with dropped ceilings to reduce the volume requiring heat. The inside of exterior walls have been furred out with wood framing to allow for insulation and utility runs, and finished with sheetrock. These interior modifications were done as the building's use changed to a residence. Items such as blackboards and other items typically attributed to a school were removed and new sheetrocked walls/partitions added to create two bedrooms and a bathroom on the north side, and one bedroom with bathroom on the south side. The south entry door opens into a large living room roughly in the center of the building. (Photos 6, 7)

Integrity

The former Black School retains its historic integrity as it relates to Criterion A in the areas of Education, Social History, and Ethnic Heritage: Black. It was specifically constructed by the Morgan County Board of Education (Cacapon District) in 1928 to provide a "separate but equal" education for black students in the Town of Paw Paw and surrounding area. The only major alteration to the exterior is the loss of the original fenestration; however, the original openings remain intact and still convey a sense of the scale of the original window area (figure 5). The building retains its original redbrick exterior and has not experienced any additions or deletions to the building's original form. The building has kept its historic integrity in terms of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, association, and feeling and readily conveys a sense of history.

The building is in its original location on 0.19 acres of land in one of the early sections of the Town of Paw Paw. Although many of the original buildings and structures in town from the period of significance have been demolished or heavily altered, enough of the historic fabric remains to serve as indicators of this town's history.

The building continues to express its original design and significance as a place of education and social gathering for black students and their families through the 8th grade from its construction in 1928 until the end of segregation in 1954.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Social History

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1928 -1954

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Raymond Hunter² (Builder)

² Raymond Hunter was a member of a prominent and prosperous Morgan County family. His uncle, Romanus Hunter was the founder of Hunter's Hardware which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2020. Raymond Hunter's father, John William Hunter, was a prolific builder in the area. Raymond Hunter and his father are credited with constructing "Highlawn Inn" for WV Senator Unger in the Town of Bath in 1902.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

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

The former Paw Paw Black School is located in the Town of Paw Paw, Morgan County, West Virginia. The town is situated in an area along the Potomac River called the “Paw Paw Bends”. The building is locally significant and eligible for listing under Criterion A for Education, and Social History. It is also eligible under Ethnic Heritage: Black. The building was constructed by the Morgan County Board of Education (Cacapon District) in 1928 to provide a “separate but equal” education for black students through the 8th grade (with a 9th grade curriculum) in Paw Paw and the surrounding area. The building also filled a social need as a place to hold activities and socialize for black families. The period of significance was from the building’s construction in 1928 to 1954 after the school closed following the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The Paw Paw Black School has survived with exterior alterations limited to infilled window replacements. While the change to the fenestration somewhat affects the historic feel of the building the scale of the original window openings is still evident and the windows could be restored. Overall, the building has retained a high level of historic integrity and has outlasted all other prominent traces of the black community’s built environment in Paw Paw and Morgan County. The only other major African-American community resource in Paw Paw, Mount Olive United Methodist Church (constructed in 1888), was sold in 1996 and subsequently demolished.³

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

General History

With the beginning of commercial navigation of the Potomac River in 1749 by fur traders of the Ohio Company, who traveled as far west as Cumberland, MD, land in the area of present-day Paw Paw was settled by farmers and rivermen.⁴ As additional settlers began arriving around 1800 in the immediate area of present-day Paw Paw, a town began to emerge. The growth accelerated in 1836 as the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company began work on the Paw Paw Tunnel directly across the Potomac River in Maryland.⁵ Then two years later, in 1838, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad - constructing a rail line from Harpers Ferry to Cumberland, MD -

³ The Mount Olive United Methodist Church, formerly Paw Paw Methodist Episcopal Church, was the first African-American Methodist church in Morgan County.

⁴ Morgan County Historical & Genealogical Society, *Berkeley Springs, WV, Morgan County, WV and its People*, (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co, 1981), 12.

⁵ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 12.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

reached the settlement. Shortly thereafter two general merchandise stores and a train depot (1845) were constructed.⁶

In 1846 the first Post Office was established with Isaac Baker as the first postmaster and the settlement was officially referred to as “Isaac Baker’s Store or Depot”.⁷ Later the settlement was identified as “Paw Paw Tunnel”, eventually “Tunnel” was dropped and the area became simply known as “Paw Paw”.⁸

Dr. Spencer in his book *Reflection of Scenes, Sounds, and Emotions of the Distant Past* wrote there were few if any slaves in Paw Paw at the time of the Civil War, which likely contributed to Paw Paw’s relative social harmony. This harmony was in reference to social relations and interactions between the majority of white citizens and the minority of black families;⁹ however, there were several prominent landowners in the immediate vicinity of the Paw Paw settlement who used slave labor to work their lands.¹⁰

In 1868, J. B. Hoyt and Company of New York constructed a tannery (leather factory) in the settlement of Paw Paw because of the ready access to oak bark for the tanning process, good transportation, and plentiful water from the Potomac.¹¹ Due to the plentiful work at the tannery Paw Paw’s population at the time of incorporation in 1891 had grown to 772.¹² It peaked in 1940 at 1,044.¹³ The establishment of the tannery served as the primary employer for those in and around Paw Paw until its sudden closing in December 1951.¹⁴

Additional job opportunities became available following the arrival of the Miller brothers from Berkeley County in 1894 as they established individual orchards (primarily apple) in and around Paw Paw. In 1912 the brothers merged the management of their businesses into the Consolidated Orchard Company. The numerous orchards provided both full time employment

⁶ Lewis Largent, “Historical Sketch of Paw Paw,” in *Once Upon a Time in Paw Paw*, ed. Janet Galliher and Vicki Sirbaugh (1997) n.p.

⁷ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 12.

⁸ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 12.

⁹ Dr. Randolph E. Spencer, Ph.D. *Reflections of Scenes, Sounds, and Emotions of the Distant Past* (McClain Printing Company, 1991), pp. 21, 22.

¹⁰ Joseph Fox (Upper Potomac Historian), interview by David Abruzzi, telephone, 30 November 2023.

¹¹ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 13.

¹² U.S. CENSUS, 1890, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/volume-3/volume-3-p8.pdf>, accessed April 25, 2024.

¹³ U.S. CENSUS, 1940 via Ancestry.com, accessed April 24, 2024.

¹⁴ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 13.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

and seasonal work in the fall during picking and packing.¹⁵ The orchard industry in the Paw Paw area was a major employer of African-Americans throughout its existence.¹⁶

While there is no written record to explain why black families chose to settle in Paw Paw it is likely the tannery, being established by men from New York in 1868, was not adverse to hiring African-Americans which created job opportunities that otherwise were not available for black citizens. In addition, with the tannery's decision in 1877 to provide a school on their property for black students, Paw Paw would have become a desirable place to work and live for African-Americans. Local resident and historian Rebecca Heath has record of one early, and possibly first black settler, a freed slave named Edward Spencer who had left the US for Canada before the Civil War but ultimately returned to the US and settled in Paw Paw.¹⁷

Criterion A

Education.

West Virginia. In 1866, the WV legislature passed a law requiring public schools be provided for black children between the ages of 6 and 21; however, schools had to maintain an average of 16 students or be closed. In 1867 the legislature amended the law for local boards of education to open a school whenever there were at least 15 students between the age 6 and 21. While the attitude of the State regarding education was separation, these first two laws were not clear on that point. In 1872 the state constitution was revised specifically stating black and white students should not be taught in the same school at the same time. In some areas of West Virginia black and white students did use the same schools with white students attending classes from September until Christmas. Black students would then attend school for the next four months; however, this sharing of the same building did not occur in Morgan County. West Virginia made no further changes regarding separate but equal education law until 1899 when the legislature required certain districts to establish one or more primary schools for black students between the ages of 6 and 21 whenever there were at least ten black children, or a smaller number if possible.¹⁸

Morgan County. With West Virginia's decision to establish a minimum number of black students to "trigger" the establishment of separate but equal schools there were cases where black children were denied their right to an equal education because of the small number of

¹⁵ Morgan County Historical, *Morgan County*, p. 253.

¹⁶ Roland Hamilton (elementary student at Paw Paw Black School at time of desegregation and later the first black teacher at Paw Paw High School), interview by David Abruzzi, Paw Paw, WV, March 7, 2024.

¹⁷ Rebecca Heath (Local Historian), interview by David Abruzzi, Paw Paw, WV, March 8, 2024.

¹⁸ Carter G. Woodson "Early Negro Education In West Virginia" (Institute: The West Virginia Collegiate Institute, 1921).

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

students. One notable case involved the Thomas Martin family living on the outskirts of Paw Paw in the late 1890's.

Thomas Martin, living in the Cacapon school district (which included Paw Paw) of Morgan County sought intervention from the state court to allow his children to attend the closest school at Camp Hill instead of walking three miles to the nearest Black School in Paw Paw.¹⁹ Thomas Martin, a Civil War Veteran who had rose to the rank of Sergeant, was a respected member of the community being a founder and trustee of the Mount Olive Church and a member of both the Odd Fellows and the Masons.²⁰ It is also recorded Martin was a First Grade Teacher at the Paw Paw Black School from 1893-1906.²¹

In 1896 J. R. Clifford, the first African-American attorney in WV, took Martin's case (Martin vs. Board of Education) all the way to the WV Supreme Court.²² The argument J.R. Clifford presented on behalf of Martin was based on the fact Martin and his family were residents of the state; they were residents and taxpayers of Morgan County; he was the father of five school-age children; and the board of education had made no provision, as required by WV statute, to provide educational facilities that would allow his children to obtain a public-school education. The lawsuit requested the State Supreme Court of Appeals review the Board of Education Cacapon District and trustees of the Camp Hill school's decision and issue a mandamus requiring admission of his children to "Camp Hill," as he believed was required by law.²³ Martin's appeal was ultimately dismissed by the WV Supreme Court with the argument being the requirement for "separate" trumped the requirement for "equal" because the WV Constitution superseded the Fourteenth Amendment.²⁴

Despite this decision black students in Paw Paw typically faired better than most in the eastern panhandle and even other black students in Morgan County. In 1921 Educator Carter G. Woodson wrote:

¹⁹ Douglas C. Smith, *A West Virginia Dilemma: Martin v. Board of Education, 1896*, https://archive.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh40-6.html, accessed March 9, 2024.

²⁰ Connie Park Rice. "'For men and measures": the life and legacy of civil rights pioneer J.R. Clifford" (2007), Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports, 3953, p. 94. <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/3953>, accessed March 11, 2024.

²¹ *One Hundred Years of Paw Paw Schools, Vol III*, ed. Tammi Galliher n.p.

²² *Martin vs. Board of Education*, 42 W. Va. 514, 26 S.E. 348 (1896).

²³ Smith, *A West Virginia Dilemma*.

²⁴ Rice, "For men and measures", p. 95.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Speaking generally, however, one must say that the education of the Negro in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia is after all much more backward than in other parts. A good example of noble effort in behalf of the Negro was given, and the spirit with which workers should address themselves to the task was furnished by the founders and graduates of Storer College; but they were not supported by public sentiment among the whites of that section. Glancing at the map of West Virginia, one can readily see that the Eastern Panhandle is geographically a part of Maryland and Virginia, States which have not as yet been converted to the wisdom of making adequate appropriations to Negro education. The ardor of these early enthusiastic workers in that section, therefore, has been dampened, and the results that they have obtained fall short of the thought and aspirations of these pioneers with reference to the rehabilitation of the freedmen that they might live as the citizens of a free republic.²⁵

Beginning in 1876, Paw Paw's black students were educated in a purpose-built building previously used as a school for white students. This school had been constructed by the J. B. Hoyt Company on their tannery property; however, following the devastating flood of 1877 that destroyed the school and much of the tannery the Board of Education of Cacapon Township purchased land adjacent to the white school to construct a new school for black students.²⁶ Educating black and white students in such proximity was not the norm in the state.²⁷

In contrast beginning in 1872, on the other side of Morgan County, black students in Berkeley Springs were attending school in a variety of homes before holding classes for a short period of time at Mt. Pisgah Church after its construction in 1887. Mount Harrison school was then purposely built for black students in Berkeley Springs shortly thereafter, but temporarily closed in 1900 and again in 1904 before closing permanently in 1922.²⁸ After the closing of the Mount Harrison School black students in Berkeley Springs were bussed five miles across the Potomac River and the West Virginia state line to Hancock, Maryland for their education.²⁹ This lack of interest in providing an education for black students likely served as a deterrent for black families to settle, or remain in Berkeley Springs.

In 1910 board members of the Cacapon Education District - comprised of prominent Paw Paw citizens Lewis Largent, President Board of Education Cacapon District, and C. E. Wentling,

²⁵ Woodson "Early Negro Education In West Virginia"

²⁶ Morgan County Deed Book 11, Page 577.

²⁷ Dr. Spencer, Ph.D. *Reflections of Scenes*, p. 68.

²⁸ Spencer, "A History of Mount Harrison School", pp. 57, 58; The Mount Harrison School was sold in 1922 and converted into a residence. It was demolished at some point after 1987.

²⁹ Dr. Randolph E. Spencer, Ph.D. "A History of Mount Harrison School 1872-1922", in *Morgan County School History*, 1987), p. 57.

Paw Paw Black School

Morgan, WV

Name of Property

County and State

first mayor of Paw Paw - purchased two parcels of property adjacent to the existing school properties for the purpose of expanding school grounds for both black and white students.³⁰

While a new graded and high school for white students was constructed first in 1913, fifteen years later the school board constructed a new two-room school for black students on the adjacent property facing on Amelia Street. The lag between purchasing the property in 1910 and construction of the new schools in Paw Paw was likely at least partially due to the limited amount of funds that could be raised via levies for constructing new school buildings throughout Morgan County.

The September 27, 1928 edition of the *Morgan Messenger* reported work on the school for colored children in Paw Paw was progressing rapidly and contractor Raymond Hunter was the “hustling contractor”.³¹ The new two-room modern brick schoolhouse in Paw Paw opened with Carroll Dennis being promoted from teacher to principal.³²

Mr. Dennis taught at the Paw Paw Black School from 1913 to 1918 and again from 1921 to 1936. The break from 1918 to 1921 was due to his serving in the Army. As an educator in Paw Paw Mr. Dennis was respected by both the black and white communities. He was active in the Black Methodist Church as organist for the church choir (despite himself being a Baptist) and was part of the community marching band. Mr. Dennis remained at the school until his resignation in 1936.³³ After Mr. Dennis’s resignation F.D. Graves served as principal from 1936 to 1938. He in turn was succeeded by Dr. Randolph Spencer who had been a pupil under Mr. Dennis. Dr. Spencer remained as the school’s principal until the end of the 1953-54 school year when the school closed following the Supreme Court’s ruling on desegregation.³⁴

Dr. Spencer was a vocal advocate on the importance of an education and held multiple degrees, culminating with a Ph.D in biology and two honorary doctorates. Dr. Spencer authored three books [listed in this bibliography] and strongly believed music enhanced the education experience. Due to this he was active in establishing a robust musical program for the Paw Paw Black Community.³⁵

Since there was no option for students to continue their education beyond the 8th grade without traveling a great distance, Dr. Spencer added a ninth-grade curriculum to the eighth-grade coursework with the following elevated courses being taught: Algebra; Biology; English; and Social Studies.³⁶ This allowed those students who did decide to travel by train to larger municipalities with black high schools to complete their four years of high school in just three

³⁰ Morgan County Deed Book 29, Page 590.

³¹ *The Morgan Messenger*, 27 September 1928.

³² Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 160.

³³ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 160.

³⁴ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 161.

³⁵ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 164.

³⁶ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 161.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

years. The quality of the education provided by Dr. Spencer, and the building itself, led a Morgan County superintendent to report that when one of the WV State Supervisors for Negro Schools visited Paw Paw the supervisor was driven to tears because of what he observed was far superior to what was offered to other black students across the state.³⁷

Dr. Spencer's efforts to improve the education opportunities for black students in Paw Paw was recognized in 1954 with the school classification being elevated from "Unclassified" to "Model Rating"--the highest classification for a West Virginia school.³⁸ It was only the second time a school in Morgan County had received the rating and it was likely the first black school in the entire state to receive the award.³⁹

For those students in the 1950s who wished to continue their education beyond the enhanced 8th grade they had to take a two-hour train ride to and from Martinsburg daily and then walk six blocks from the Martinsburg station to Ramer Memorial School, or attend high school in places like Cumberland, MD which required boarding away from Paw Paw during the school week. Three black students - Yvonne Largent (Powell), Randall Spencer, Jr., and Peggy Anderson - from Paw Paw made the journey to Martinsburg for two years until the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954 allowed them the option to return to Paw Paw and attend the newly integrated Paw Paw High School to complete their education. Despite excelling in high school Yvonne Powell was denied her academic recognition at her graduation in 1955. She ultimately was awarded the Salutatorian award in 1986, 31 years after graduating.⁴⁰ However, per Mr. Roland Hamilton, who had done the research to justify the delayed recognition of her academic achievement, Yvonne Powell had tied for Valedictorian, but was denied both Valedictorian and Salutatorian in 1955.⁴¹

Although integration at Paw Paw went smoothly and was completed in 1954, which was not often the case in other areas of West Virginia,⁴² it appears there was some confusion over whether or not integration would occur right away. As late as August 5, 1954 the *Morgan Messenger* listed a teaching vacancy at the Paw Paw Negro School for the soon to begin school year.⁴³ This likely contributed to the 1954-55 school year for black students beginning cautiously. Mr. Hamilton shared how his first day at the newly integrated Paw Paw elementary school in the fall of 1954 was actually the second day of the school year because black families in Paw Paw did not know if their children would be welcomed and admitted to their classes.⁴⁴

³⁷ Spencer, Ph.D. "A History of Paw Paw Negro School", p. 158.

³⁸ Spencer, Ph.D. "A History of Paw Paw Negro School", p. 161.

³⁹ Spencer, Ph.D. "A History of Paw Paw Negro School", p. 164.

⁴⁰ Karen Sweeney. "School Days School Days All Those Banning Rule Days", *The Evening Journal*, June 3, 1986.

⁴¹ Hamilton Interview.

⁴² The Bluestone High School for black students in Bramwell, WV did not close until 1964.

⁴³ *The Morgan Messenger*, 5 August 1954.

⁴⁴ Hamilton Interview.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

However, in the September 16, 1954 edition of the *Morgan Messenger* a short article stated the newcomers were warmly welcomed.⁴⁵

Former pupils of the Paw Paw Black School went on to be teachers, counselors, military officers, Federal employees, and professional musicians.⁴⁶ One former pupil, James E. ‘Schooner’ Spencer, was recognized as “most distinguished West Virginian” in December 1980.⁴⁷

Social History

Per an analysis of the 1940 census the population of Paw Paw at the time was 1,044 with the black population numbering 194 or about 19%. There were 35 black head of households (family units) listed in the census with the majority employed as laborers, and where a specific employer is listed it was the tannery. Of the 35 heads of household 20 (57%) owned their own homes. The percentage of black home ownership in Paw Paw in 1940 exceeded white home ownership which was 128 of 231 or 55%.⁴⁸ Per interviews with older local black residents who lived in Paw Paw the vast majority of the black families resided on Potomac St just one block over and down the hill from the Black School on North Amelia St.⁴⁹

During the period of segregation, the Paw Paw Black School served as the social and civic center for the small African American community. The school hosted a variety of activities and programs for both children and adults. Dr Spencer established a community band organization called “The Paw Paw School Band and Society”. This band presented concerts throughout the Eastern Panhandle.⁵⁰ Per Ms. Yvonne Powell the school was used to host plays and concerts and even athletic events. These events were often so well attended by community members it required the wall between the two classrooms to be opened to accommodate the large number of attendees.⁵¹

The school also sponsored black Boy Scout Troop 35 and at one point was the only Boy Scout Troop in the area after a troop for white boys disbanded. In addition to his role as teacher, school principal, and bandleader Dr Spencer served as scoutmaster.⁵² A *Morgan Messenger*

⁴⁵ *The Morgan Messenger*, 16 September 1954.

⁴⁶ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 161.

⁴⁷ *Hampshire Review*, obituary for James E. “Schooner” Spencer, https://www.hampshirereview.com/obituaries/article_0f99ae32-9a21-11e6-9f9f-df4483946618.html. Accessed April 20, 2024.

⁴⁸ U.S. CENSUS, 1940 via Ancestry.Com. Accessed April 24, 2024.

⁴⁹ Hamilton Interview; Yvonne Powell, (K-8 student at Paw Paw Black School and first African-American graduate of Paw Paw High School), interview by David Abruzzi, telephone, March 27, 2024.

⁵⁰ Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 161.

⁵¹ Powell, Interview.

⁵² Spencer, Ph.D. “A History of Paw Paw Negro School”, p. 164.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

article on the history of the school mentioned how the building served as a place for Paw Paw's black community to hold "pride lectures".⁵³

While the Black School and White School properties backed up to one another the two were required to maintain two distinct playgrounds in accordance with WV state law mandating separate but equal. So, while elementary students from both schools were frequently on their respective playgrounds - sited side-by-side - at the same time during the school day they were not allowed to interact during school hours, yet often were found playing together after the school day ended.⁵⁴

Since closing after the 1953-54 school year as a result of the Brown vs Board of Education outlawing "separate but equal" the building has gone through a variety of owners. The first owner after the school closed and sat unused was the Central Assembly of God Congregation of Cumberland, Maryland, who purchased the building in 1969. The old school entered into private ownership in 1982, changing hands again in 1991 before being acquired by the current owner in 1994.⁵⁵ The current owner acquired the property for his family's residence specifically to ensure it would not be demolished.⁵⁶

After nearly 100 years since its construction, the former Paw Paw Black School continues to convey its historic association with the Town of Paw Paw's education and social history. For more than 25 years the building served to educate black students, and as a place of social gathering for the small number of black families in Paw Paw who had chosen to live primarily in the immediate vicinity of the school. The building remains largely unchanged since that time. The important role the school played in black education and the black community - coupled with its historic integrity in terms of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, association, and feeling - makes the building worthy of an individual nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵³ Kate Evans, "Paw Paw Black School was an historic school of excellence", *Morgan Messenger*, August 13, 2014, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Hamilton Interview; Powell Interview.

⁵⁵ Morgan County Assessor's Map Card - Town of Paw Paw Lot 5-3-49.

⁵⁶ John Pritchard (current owner), interview by David Abruzzi, Paw Paw, WV, April 19, 2024.

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

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Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

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Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

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Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.19 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 39.531403 Longitude: -78.459592

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17N

Easting: 718344

Northing: 4378830

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

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

The building sits on a small 0.19 acre sloping lot bordered by N. Amelia Street to the west, a residential lot with a late 1800's "I-House" to the south, an apartment complex to the east, and a vacant lot to the north. The boundaries are shown as a solid redline on the attached map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary selected is the current property boundary on which the former Paw Paw Black School is located. The current boundary aligns with the historical boundary except for the east (back) boundary that was reduced after the school was closed and sold.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: David Abruzzi, RA
organization: Cacapon Preservation Solutions, LLC
street & number: 18534 Cacapon Rd
city or town: Great Cacapon state: WV zip code: 25422
e-mail: david@cacaponpreservationsolutions.com
telephone: 304-947-7465
date: 28 April 2024

Note. Nomination completed in collaboration with Mary Hott, singer/songwriter and Rebecca Heath, local Paw Paw historian.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Figure Log

- 1 of 5. USGS Topographical Locational Map
- 2 of 5. Satellite Imagery
- 3 of 5. Exterior Photo Key
- 4 of 5. Interior Photo Key
- 5 of 5. Main Elevation, Facing East, (circa 1930)

Photographs

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

Photo Log

Name of Property: Paw Paw Black School

City or Vicinity: Paw Paw

County: Morgan

State: WV

Photographer: David Abruzzi

Date Photographed: 23 April 2024

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

- 1 of 10. Main Elevation, Facing East
- 2 of 10. Details on Main Elevation
- 3 of 10. Entry Door, Original
- 4 of 10. Oblique Angle, Facing Northeast
- 5 of 10. Rear Elevation, Facing West
- 6 of 10. North Side Elevation, Facing South
- 7 of 10. Main Interior Space
- 8 of 10. Main Interior Space showing location of woodburning stove
- 9 of 10. Section of Exposed Terracotta Structural block
- 10 of 10. Basement

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

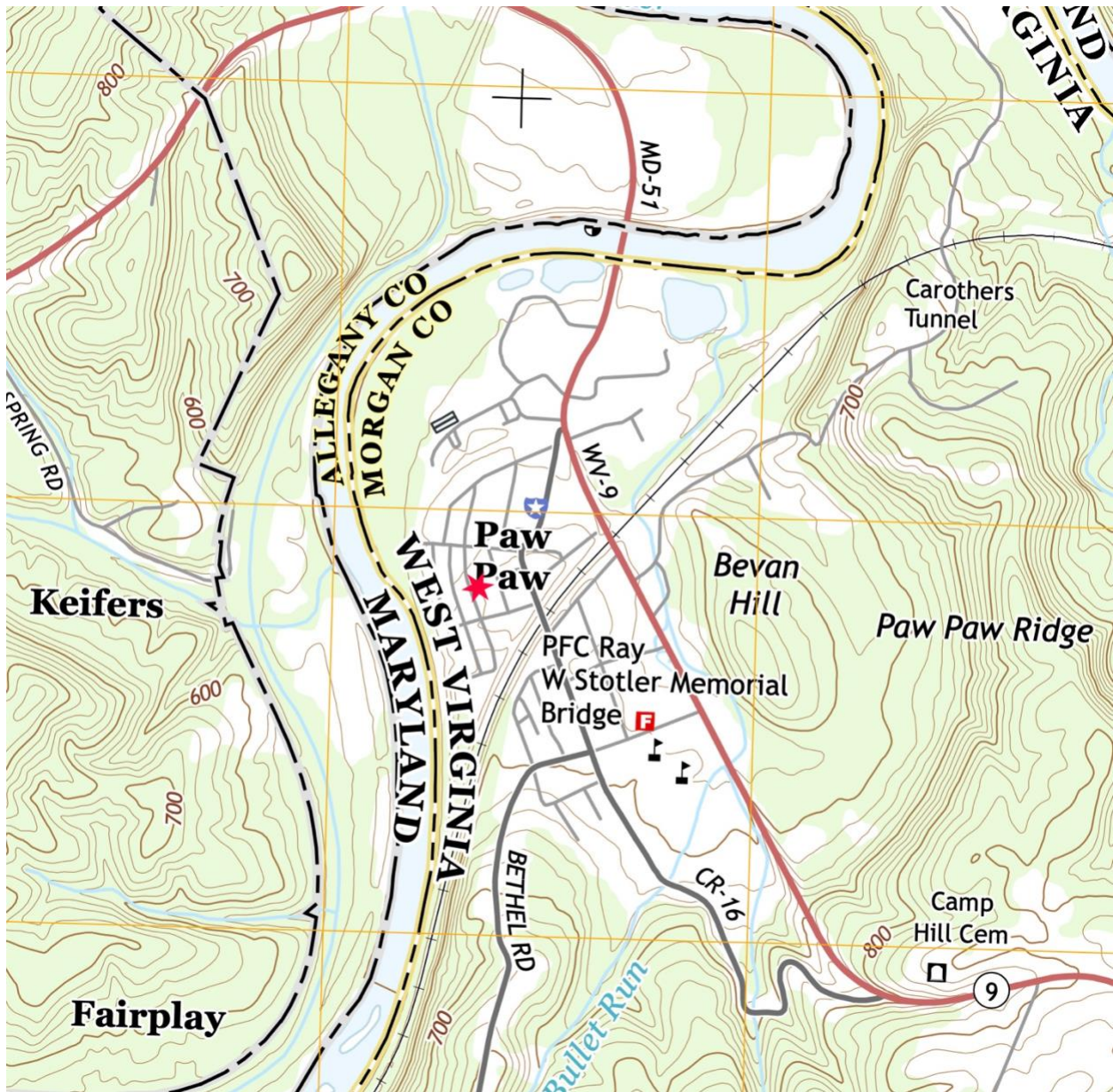


Figure 1: USGS Topographical Locational Map

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

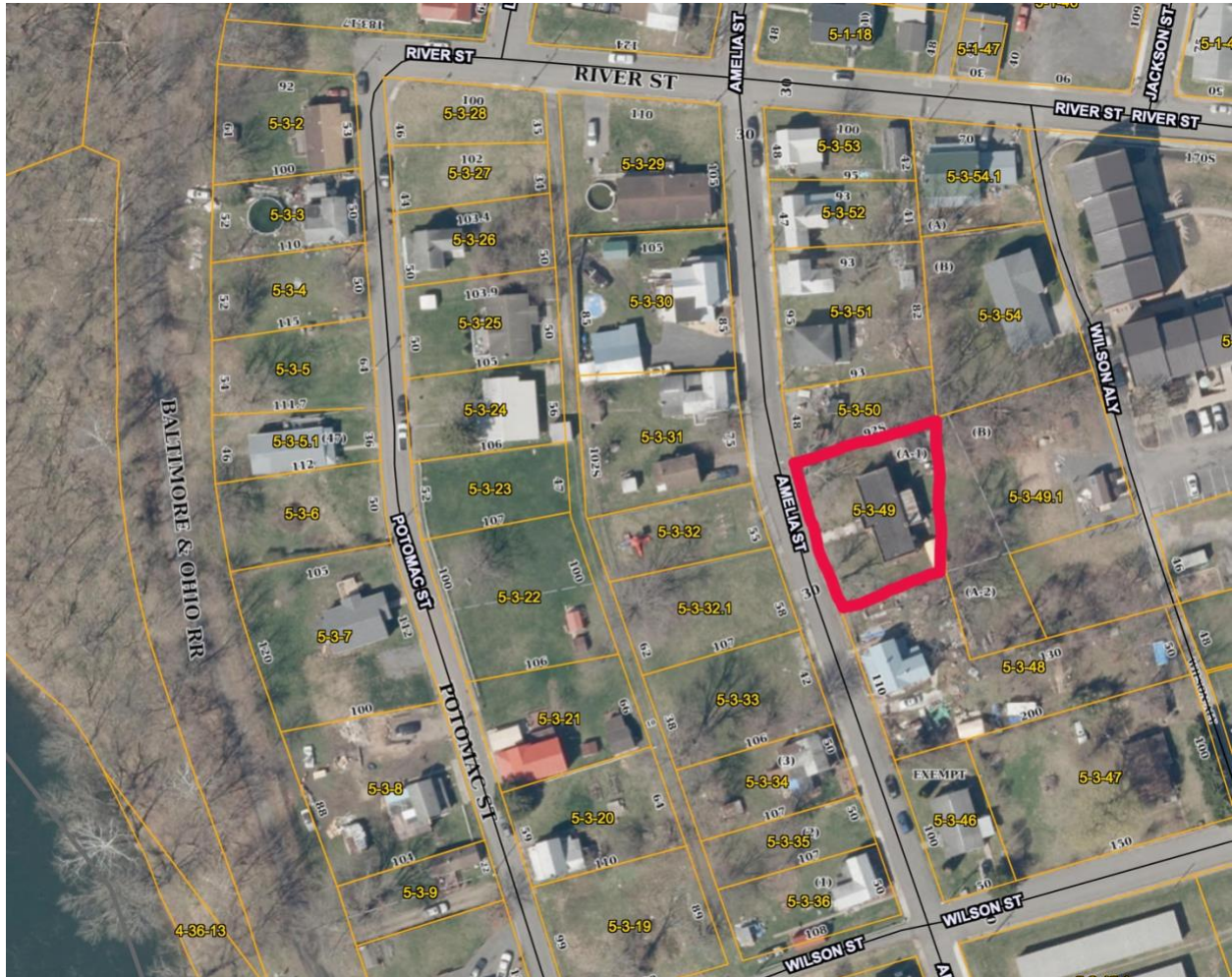


Figure 2: Satellite Imagery

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

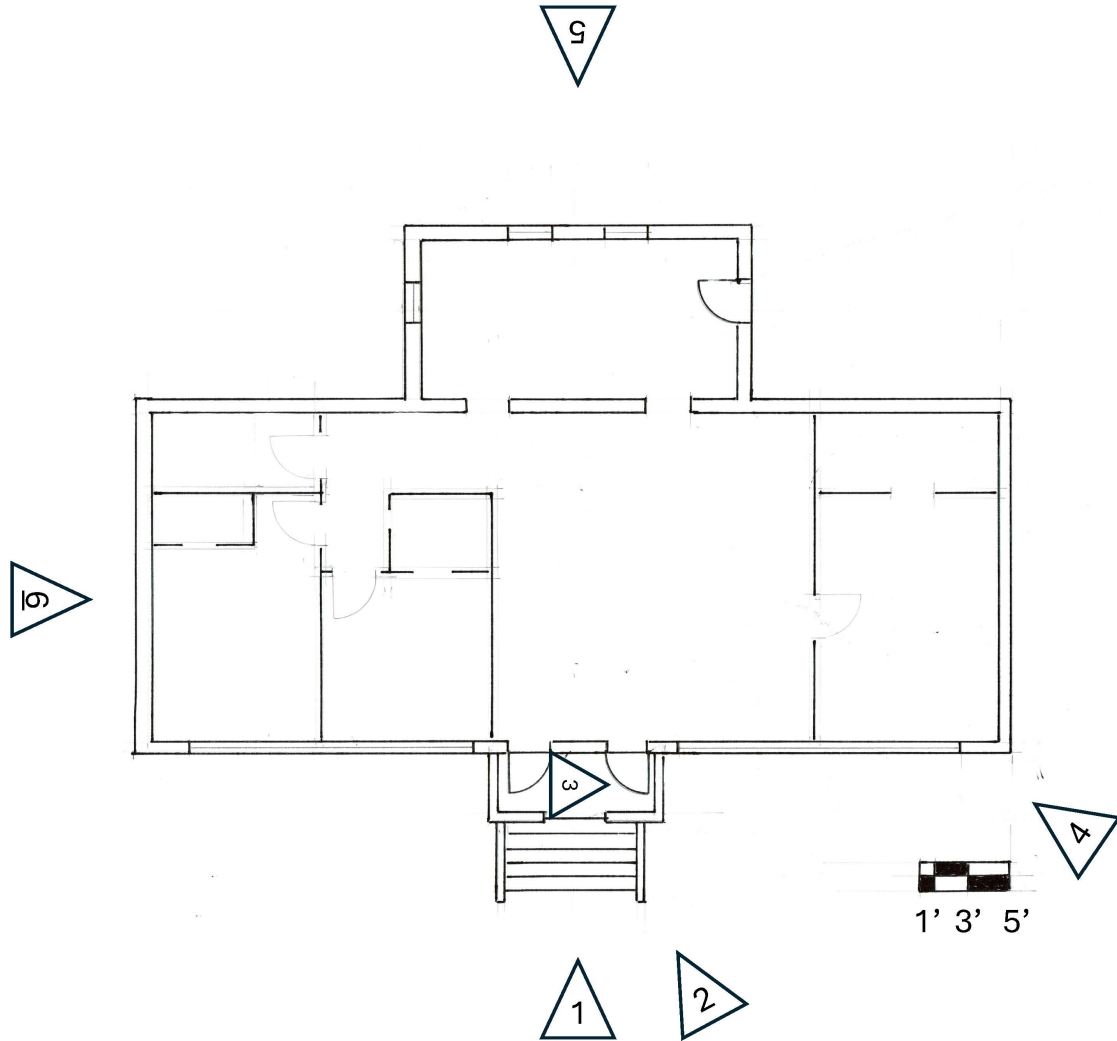


Figure 3. Exterior Photo Key

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State

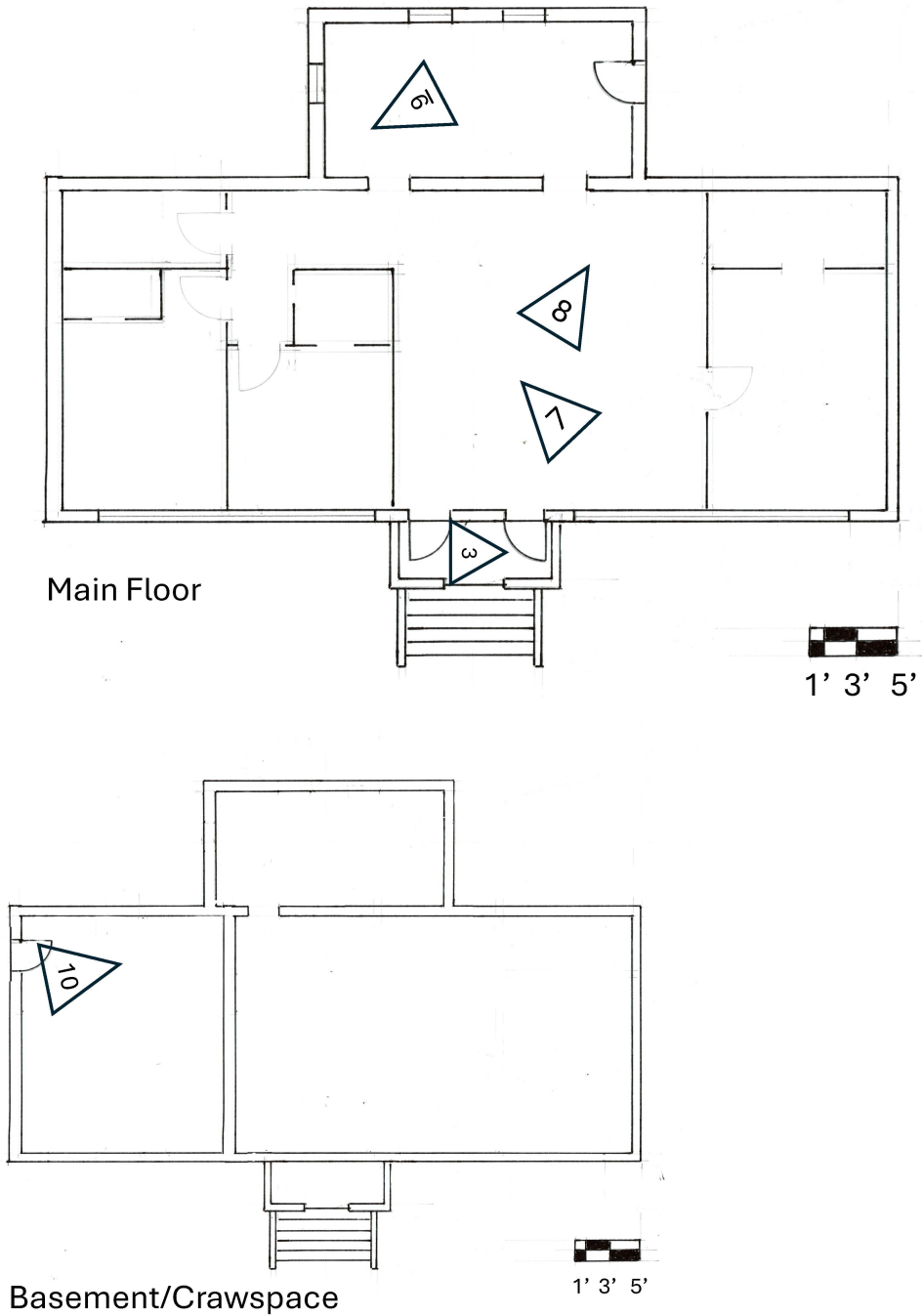


Figure 4: Interior Photo Key

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Figure 5. Main Elevation, Facing East, (circa 1930)

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 1. Main Elevation, Facing East

Paw Paw Black School

Name of Property

Morgan, WV

County and State



Photo 2. Details on Main Elevation

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 3. Entry Door, Original

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 4. Oblique Angle, Facing Northeast

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 5. Rear Elevation, Facing East

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 6. North Elevation, Facing South

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 7. Main Interior Space

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 8. Main Interior Space showing location of woodburning stove

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 9. Section of Exposed Terracotta Structural block

Paw Paw Black School
Name of Property

Morgan, WV
County and State



Photo 10. Basement