

Stephen T. Mather Training Center

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Stephen T. Mather Training Center
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia



Past and Present



Mission Statement

The Stephen T. Mather Training Center commits itself to the professional growth and continuous learning of all employees in their assigned career fields and special programs, and will provide them with comprehensive, competency-based, mission-focused training and development programs.

Yesterday

The atmosphere of education, research, and the exploration of new ideas is a familiar one to the Camp Hill area. For almost a century, the buildings located here served as the backbone of Storer College, one of this nation's first institutions of higher learning established primarily for African Americans.

The history of Storer College has its roots in abolitionist John Brown's arrival in Harpers Ferry. The Civil War that followed Brown's October 1859 raid devastated the small town, until then a thriving

industrialized community with a large Federal Arsenal and Armory.

Buildings were burned, businesses destroyed, and the townspeople relocated as first Union then Confederate troops moved in and out of the area.

Townspeople who returned after the war in 1865 soon realized that any hopes of rebuilding Harpers Ferry to its former prominence were doomed. A series of floods in the late 1800s ended any dreams of grandeur that were left.

Storer

The devastation wrought by the Civil War had one positive result. In 1865, a few concerned citizens, former members of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Christian Commission, received permission from the War Department to use two of the Camp Hill Armory residences as classrooms for the education of freed African Americans.

John Storer, a Maine businessman, offered the small school \$10,000 for the establishment of a college or normal school without restrictions as to race or color. In 1867, Storer College was granted a charter by the West Virginia legislature. One year later, Congress deeded the majority of Camp Hill and the four remaining Armory residences to the new college.

For the next century, Storer College flourished, annually graduating an average of 150 young men and women.

The faculty and student body were racially mixed until the end of World War I. The growing demand by African Americans for space at the school caused the administration to encourage potential white students to attend other institutions not open to African Americans.

Enrollment declined after the 1954 Desegregation Act and in 1955 Storer College closed. The buildings on the old campus, including Old Anthony Hall, Cook Hall Dormitory, and the college chapel, cafeteria, and library remained empty for the next

A Tradition Continued

“Harpers Ferry is a meeting place of winds and waters, rocks and ranges,” Carl Sandburg once wrote. Today the National Park Service’s Mather Training Center, located high above Harpers Ferry on historic Camp Hill, is another meeting place, one of minds and ideas.

In 1962, the National Park Service began looking for a location for its new training institute. The buildings at Storer College were acquired.

The Stephen T. Mather Training Center coordinates approximately 250 Servicewide Training and Development events, annually serving over 8,000 Service Employees.



Campus

The Mather Training Center campus is composed of two main structures. Wirth Hall, formerly Anthony Hall, is named for former National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth and houses the classrooms and administrative offices. Storer’s Cook Hall Dormitory is shared by Mather and the Interpretive Design Center, located on the site of the Storer College cafeteria and dormitory. The Anthony Library, formerly the Storer College library, houses reference materials for students and researchers.

The courses offered at the Stephen T. Mather Training Center are open to employees of the National Park Service and occasionally outside participants.



Career Field and Special Programs

Mather Training Center is responsible for the training and development of Service employees in the following fields:

- Education
- Interpretation
- National Park Service Interagency Partnership with the National Conservation Training Center
- NPS Fundamentals V Program
- Partnerships
- Recreation & Conservation Programs
- Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Programs

Information

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