

Yesterday and Today



"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.

Mather was opened in 1964 as an interpretive research and training institute for

Rangers and Park Managers. An expanded concept of Park Service training needs has led Mather to its current curriculum, which ranges from historic building maintenance to interpretive operations for first-line supervisors.

Approximately 1,500 trainees complete one- and two-week courses at Mather annually.

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 black 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 in 1865 after the war soon realized that any hopes they may have had 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.

The devastation wrought by the Civil War had one positive result. In 1865 a few concerned citizens, former members of



the Freedman'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 blacks. John Storer, a Maine businessman, offered the small school \$10,000 for the establishment of a college or normal school without restriction 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

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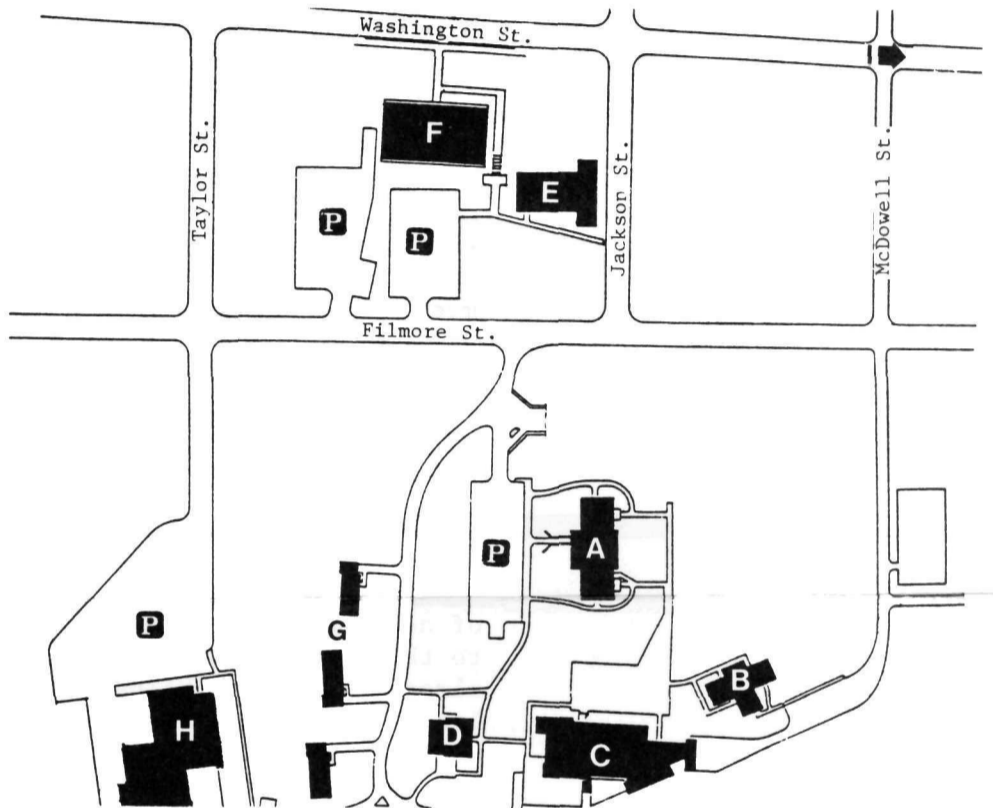


of World War I when the growing demand by blacks for space at the school caused the administration to discourage potential white students. Enrollment declined after the 1954 desegregation act and in 1955 Storer College closed. The buildings on the old campus, including Old Anthony Hall, Cook Hall Dormitory, and the college chapel, cafeteria, and library remained empty for the next few years.

at Storer College were acquired. Several of the older, more deteriorated structures were removed and the rest of the buildings were extensively renovated or restored. The Stephen T. Mather Training Center, named in honor of the first director of the National Park Service, opened its doors in 1964 to continue the tradition of higher education on Camp Hill.

In 1962 the National Park Service began looking for a location for its new training institute. The buildings

Today



CAMP HILL COMPLEX NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

- A. Mather Training Center
- B. Cook Hall Dormitory
- C. Interpretive Design Center
- D. Anthony Library
- E. Storer College Chapel
- F. Conservation Labs
- G. Staff Residences
- H. Park Maintenance Shops
- I. To Harpers Ferry Park

Much of the formal training of National Park Service employees is given at Mather Training Center. Each year a varied curriculum is offered. Each course seeks to promote individual commitment and achievement through established methods of adult education.

New employees receive general orientation to the policies and programs of the agency. Uniformed employees responsible for interpreting our natural and cultural heritage receive intensive training in a wide range of communication skills. Service managers entrusted with programs in interpretation, law enforcement, maintenance, land acquisition, and other fields participate in a number of courses and conferences.

The Mather Training Center campus is composed of two main structures. Wirth Hall (once Storer College's Anthony Hall), named for former National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth, houses the classrooms and administrative offices. Storer's Cook Hall Dormitory is still used as a dormitory for Park Service trainees. Other buildings on the campus are shared by the training center and the Interpretive Design Center, a modern building located on the site of the Storer College cafeteria. The Anthony Library, formerly the Storer College Library, houses reference materials for students and researchers.

The training courses offered at Mather are open to all employees of the National Park Service. An annual training calendar is available by writing to: Superintendent, Stephen T. Mather Training Center, P.O. Box 77, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425.