HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

PART II.

HISTORICAL DATA SECTION.

for

part II - Historical Data
1959

PILGRIMS NO. 9 AND 10

LOT 14

THE GERARD P. WAGNER BUILDINGS

HF-58

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by:
Charles W. Snell
Historian (Park Supervisory)
March 18, 1959
22 Pages
Project No. HP-58
7 Photos
3 Maps
Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument

Subject: Research Project No. HF-58, Historic Building Report, Part II, Historical Data Section, for Bldgs. 9 and 8

We submit one copy of the "Historic Building Report, Part II, Historical Data Section, for Bldgs. No. 9 and 8, The Gerard B. Wager Buildings," dated March 18, 1959, 22 pages, by Historian Charles W. Snell, for technical review by Regional Historian Frank Barnes.

(SGD) FRANK H. ANDERSON

Frank H. Anderson
Superintendent

In duplicate
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HISTORICAL DATA SECTION

1. OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, 1782-1873

Wager Lot No. 14, the present site of Bldgs. No. 9 and 8, was owned by the Wager family from 1782 to 1835. On October 10, 1835, the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery for Jefferson County, Virginia, divided the Wager family holdings in Harpers Ferry among the three Wager heirs and Lot No. 14 was allotted to Gerard B. Wager. Gerard B. Wager held title to Lot No. 14 from 1835 to his death in 1846 and his estate and heirs retained possession of the property until 1873. The location of Wager Lot No. 14 may be seen by glancing at the 1835 plat of Wager property on the following page of this report.

2. CONSTRUCTION OF BLDGS. NO. 9 AND 8

On February 21, 1836, Gerard B. Wager leased to Michael Foley a "tenement" (probably the old stone foundations now under Bldg. No. 8) on Wager Lot No. 14, "then in the possession of and occupancy of N. Fitzsimmons, being a part of lot no. 14 and adjoining the lot (Wager Lot No. 13) recently rented by John G. Wilson." Under the lease, Foley was to have the lot and the tenement for eight years, starting from April 1, 1836, paying Mr. Wager an annual ground rent of $120. It was further agreed that Michael Foley "should erect upon Lot 14 a good and substantial house of brick or stone three stories high above the basement and not less than forty feet deep and covering the whole front.

Tracing of Portion of 1835 Plat of Wager Lots. Traced from the Original in the Jefferson County Court House, Deed Book 29, by A. W. Franzen.
of the lot (27½ feet)"

Between April 1, 1838, and September, 1838, Michael Foley therefore proceeded to erect Bldg. No. 9. The new house fronted 29 feet 2 5/8 inches on Shenandoah Street and was forty feet deep. The structure contained a cellar and probably had a slate roof. The brick building was three and a half stories in height, and thus generally met the specifications contained in the 1836 lease. The first floor was designed to be utilized as a large store and the upper two and a half floors were intended for use as a residence.

It is important to remember that Bldg. No. 9 did not become a corner building until April, 1856, but was hemmed in tightly on the east from 1838 until 1856 by a 27½ by 40 feet, three and a half story brick building located on Wager Lot 13. This may well account for why there was only one door and five windows in the east wall of Bldg. No. 9. In 1856 the house on Lot No. 13 was purchased by the United States and demolished. Lot 13 was then made a part of what is now Potomac Street. It is therefore possible that the windows and door shown in the east wall of Bldg. No. 9 (See Photograph HF-18) were not actually installed until the 1856-61 period.


3. Virginia Free Press, September 27, 1838, p.3, c.3. The new building was first rented in September, 1838.


5. Depth of original building from June 6, 1846 plat of exchange of land between Gerard B. Wager and Philip Coones, in Deed Book 28, p.146.

Foley sold his leasehold to this building and lot to John O'Hara on January 18, 1840, for $500. On the following page will be found an 1846 plat for an exchange of land between Gerard B. Wager and Philip Coons that indicates the depth of Bldg. 9 at that date.

**Construction of Bldg. No. 8**

No direct documentary evidence has been found relating to the construction of Bldg. No. 8. The stone foundations and woodwork under Bldg. 8, however, appears to be much older than those found in Bldg. No. 9. The 1836 lease mentioned a "tenement" then occupied by N. Fitzsimmons as being located on the lot. The old foundations therefore probably date from the earlier house and must therefore have been erected by the Wager family, or more likely by John Fitzsimmons in 1829, under a five year lease from the Wagers. There is also a slight possibility that these foundations may have been a part of Robert Harpers' first house, which is reputed, according to local tradition, to have been located on this lot.

In any event, the upper portions of the older house were demolished, probably by John O'Hara between 1840 and 1846, and a new two and one-half story brick annex erected over the old stone foundations. The new wing was 18 feet 10½ inches wide and 29 feet one inch in length. Two large chimneys were located on the east wall.


8. For lease see Snell, Charles W., "Historic Building Site Survey Report, for Wager Lot No. 2," dated September 12, 1958, revised October 8, 1958, p.10. John Fitzsimmons was to erect on Shenandoah Street a frame building 20 by 15 feet, one and a half stories high.

9. Bldg. No. 8 was standing by 1846; see Deed of Exchange, G. B. Wager and Philip Coons, May 30, 1846, Deed Book 28, pp.144-145 in Snell, C. W., "Historic Bldg. Report, Part I, for Bldg. 9," p.4. Deed mentions "Main Building" thus inferring that others were standing. Bldg. 8 was probably built 1841-42.
Deed Book 28,
P. 146
June 6, 1846
Map No. 69
Drawer no. 4
This wing may have contained a kitchen for use in conjunction with Bldg. No. 9, as well as extra bed rooms or rooms for slaves. The roof sloped sharply to the west and contained two dormer windows. Also probably located on the west side of the annex, because of the view to the east had been shut off up to 1856 by a similar wing on the rear of the large brick building located on Lot No. 13, was a two story frame porch and the doors to Bldg. No. 8. The 1894 Perris-Sanborn map of Harpers Ferry, which shows Bldgs. No. 9 and 8 before they were remodeled, will be found on the following page of this report.

3. **USE OF THE BLDGS., 1839-1861**

Lot No. 14 was leased by Gerard B. Wager to Michael Foley for eight years from April 1, 1836. Mr. Foley erected Bldg. No. 9 in 1837-38. The house was completed by September, 1838, and was rented that month by James H. Hayman. Mr. Hayman advertised that he had "taken the new house recently erected, opposite the United States Arsenal,...and fitted up the lower story of the same as a RESTORATIVE AND EATING HOUSE." His "National Restorative" included a bar, with wine, liquors, Porter and Ale. Fresh oysters were also served.

Hayman remained in business in Bldg. No. 9 until September, 1839, when he

10. Historic American Building Survey Drawing for Bldg. No. 9 and 8, giving width of 8 and overall length of 9 and 8, from which I have subtracted 40 feet from total, thus leaving original length of 8.

11. Photograph HF-72.


14. *Harpers Ferry Constitutional*, September 11, 1839, p.3, "about to remove to his new establishment..."
Sanborn-Perris Map of Harpers Ferry November 1894. Scale: 50 feet = one inch.
removed his tavern to Bldg. No. 15.

On January 18, 1840, Michael Foley sold his lease to the lot to
John O'Hara for $500. A trust sale of O'Hara's property was threatened in
1841 and 1842, and on both occasions the improvements on the lot were described
as "being a large three-story brick building and other necessary buildings."

Probably in October, 1839, Bldg. No. 9 was next rented by Henry
Yost and William Coates, who opened a large Grocery Store in the "STORE OP-
POSITE THE ARSENAL YARD." This partnership was dissolved on May 28, 1840,
and Henry Yost continued the business "at the same stand." Bldg. No. 9 was
occupied as a grocery store by Henry Yost from 1840 to June 30, 1842, when
he moved to the building located on the southwest end of Wager Lot No. 12.

From April, 1843, to December, 1845, Bldgs. No. 9 was next occupied
by John G. Wilson as a dry goods and grocery store.

In November, 1844, John O'Hara sold one undivided half interestin
the leasehold to Lot No. 14 and Bldgs. No. 9 and 10 to William Lester. In

15. Deed of Trust, Hayman to Lucas, Jr., March 6, 1840, securing rent for
Bldg. No. 15, in Deed Book 24, p.405.

16. Assignment of Lease, January 18, 1840, Deed Book 24, pp.157-158. Also
Deed of Trust, O'Hara to Isaac Fouke, January 18, 1840, Deed Book 24, pp.63-64.

17. Virginia Free Press, June 26, 1841, p.3, c.4; August 16, 1842, p.3, c.3;
Release of Trust, Isaac Fouke to O'Hara, December 5, 1842, Deed Book 26, pp.
170-171.

18. Virginia Free Press, March 12, 1840, p.3, c.3.

19. Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, July 23, 1840, p.4; notice dated May
28, 1840.

dated September 24, 1858, pp.18-19.

21. Virginia Free Press, April 27, 1843, p.3, c.2; October 12, 1843, p.3,
c.1; May 2, 1844, p.3, c.2.

22. Deed of Trust, Lester to Isaac Fouke and other, November 19, 1844, Deed
Book 27, p.136.
August, 1845, Mr. Lester sold his half-interest to Gerard B. Wager for $875.
and in March, 1846, Mr. Wager acquired O'Hara's remaining half interest in
the leasehold for $1,000. The total value of Bldgs. No. 8 and 9 in 1845-
46 thus amounted to $1,675.

In January or April, 1845, Bldg. No. 9 was next occupied as a drug
store by Dr. Joseph G. Hays. In January, 1847, Dr. Hays gave notice that
he had "made arrangements to accommodate a few general BOARDERS." Hays
remained in business in Bldg. No. 9 until April, 1848.

In May, 1848, Adam Young, Jr., informed the public that he had re-
moved his drug store "to the Store Room recently occupied by Joseph G. Hays,
adjointing the Store of Philip Coons (which was located in Bldg. No. 10), and
opposite the Arsenal, Main Street..."

Mr. Adam Young, Jr., remained in business at Bldg. No. 9 from 1848
until October, 1855, when he took his family West. Young had been the

23. Deed of B. & S., Lester to Wager, August 14, 1846, Deed Book 27, pp.378-
379.

24. Deed of B. & S., O'Hara to Wager, March 31, 1846, Deed Book 28, pp.96-
97.


26. Ibid., January, 1847, p.4, c.7.

27. Ibid., January 21, 1847, p.3, c.7; May 11, 1848, p.3, c.1.

28. Ibid., May 11, 1848, p.3, c.1; For location of Young's drug store prior
15-17. For location of Philip Coons store, see Snell, C. W., "Historic Build-
ing Report, Part I, for Bldgs. No. 10 and 10A, the John C. Unseld Buildings,"
dated May 28, 1858, p.19.

29. Ibid., January 11, 1849, p.3, c.1; January 31, 1850, p.3, c.3; March
14, 1850, p.3, c.4; October 25, 1855, p.2, c.1; Census of 1850, Reel 10,
V.2, p.111.
Harpers Ferry agent for the Baltimore drug firm of Joseph Crosby and Son.

There is no documentary evidence on who rented the building from October, 1865, to April, 1861. The only possible lead as to who may have occupied Bldg. No. 9 in the 1859-61 period lies in the Census of 1860. The census indicates that the first person the census taker visited after stopping at the house of Mr. William J. Stephens, who resided at a building situated on Wager Lot No. 5, was John G. Ridencour, a merchant. As Bldg. No. 9 was located just across the street from Wager Lot 5, it is therefore possible that Ridencour was located in Bldg. No. 9. This theory is further strengthened by the fact that the house next to Stephens, located on Wager Lot No. 4, in the other direction, is known to have been occupied by other persons than Ridencour in the 1859-61 period.

It is therefore likely that John G. Ridencour was located in Bldg. No. 9 in the 1859-61 period. If this is the case, then Mr. Ridencour must be withdrawn as a possible occupant of Store No. 2 in Bldg. No. 38 at that period. Assuming that Ridencour was actually located in Bldg. No. 9 in 1860, we then know he first opened his new dry goods store in November, 1859.

The Census of 1860 provides us with the following information on Mr. Ridencour and his family:


33. Virginia Free Press, November 11, 1858, p.2, c.7.
Maggie " 4, female, " " "
Mary E. " 7, female, " " " 34

4. **HISTORICAL PLANS OF THE BUILDINGS**

No historical plans of Bldgs. No. 9 and 8 have been found and it is highly unlikely that any will ever be located.

5. **HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS**

Historical prints and photographs showing Bldgs. No. 9 and 8 will be found in the following research reports that have already been submitted:

1. 1859 photograph, HF-66, in Shell, Charles W., *Report for Wager Lots No. 6, 7 and Part of 8, the Wager House or United States Hotel,* dated August 7, 1958, page 35. Important, shows rear roof of Bldg. 9 and also of 8.


In APPENDIX I of this report will be found seven other photographs showing Bldgs. No. 9 and 8.

6. SUMMARY OF THE HISTORICAL DATA

-12-
A. Ownership of the Land, 1782-1873

Lot No. 14 was owned by the Wager family from 1782 to 1835. On October 10, 1835, the lot was allotted to Gerard B. Wager. He remained the owner of Lot No. 14 from 1835 to his death in 1848 and his estate and heirs retained title to the property until 1873.

B. Construction of Bldgs. No. 9 and 8

Bldg. No. 9 was erected by Michael Foley in 1837-38. The new house was a 3½ story brick building with a cellar and probably had a slate roof. The structure fronted 29 feet 2 5/8 inches on Shenandoah Street and was forty feet deep. The first floor was designed for use as one store and the upper 2½ floors contained living quarters. By 1859 the building had a slate roof, five windows and one door in the east wall and also one or more windows in the north or rear wall.

The original Bldg. No. 8 was probably constructed by John O'Hara in 1841-42 on the site of an earlier house, the stone foundations of the latter being incorporated into Bldg. No. 8. The new building was built of brick and was 2½ stories high, with a steep pitched roof that sloped to the west. This roof contained two dormer windows on the west side. A two story frame porch as well as the doors and windows to Bldg. No. 8 were probably located on the west side of the house. On the east wall or side there were two large chimneys and four windows located one above the other. These windows were situated between the two chimneys. The north wall or end of the building contained at least one window at the top floor and probably had a total of four windows, one in each floor, including one in the basement. Bldg. No. 8 was 16 feet wide and 29 feet one inch in length. It probably contained a kitchen and pantry as well as extra bedrooms for the service of Bldg. No. 9. The first
floor may also have been used as a warehouse for the store in 9.

C. Use of Bldgs. No. 9 and 8, 1838-1861

1. September, 1838-September, 1839; Tavern of James H. Hayman.
2. 1839-May, 1840; Grocery store of Henry Yost and William Coates.
3. May, 1840-June, 1842; Grocery store of Henry Yost.
4. 1843-1845; Dry Goods Store of John G. Wilson.
5. 1845-1848; Drug store of Dr. Joseph G. Hays.
6. 1848-October, 1855; Drug store of Adam Young, Jr., agent for Joseph Crosby and Son of Baltimore.
7. 1855-1861; No sure record of use.
8. November, 1858-April, 1861; Probably the dry goods store of John G. Ridanour.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Photograph RP-55, in the Appendix of this report, well illustrates the original relationship of Bldgs. No. 9 and 8 to the John Brown engine house and the Armory Gate. It is readily apparent that Bldg. No. 9 and 8 formed an important part of the 1859 historical scene at the time of the John Brown Raid. It is therefore recommended that both Bldgs. No. 9 and 8 be restored to their 1859 exterior appearance. In the case of Bldg. 8, the structure must largely be reconstructed above the first floor.

It is also recommended that no attempt be made to restore the interiors of these two structures, but rather if they are to be utilized as a branch museum, that the interiors be adapted for this special use.

(Sgd) CHARLES W. SNELL
Charles W. Snell
Historian (Park Supervisor)
March 16, 1959
APPENDIX I

(Seven Photographs)
HARPER'S FERRY, VA., 1862

Original photograph in National Archives Still Picture Section, Washington, D. C., CN-5979.
This photograph, Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-375 is a blowup made from HF-11.

Through the break in the bridge, from right to left, may be seen Bldgs. No. 9, 10, 11 and 12. Note that Bldg. No. 10 is a 2½ story structure and that Bldgs. No. 11 and 12 are both three story buildings. Bldgs. No. 10, 11 and 12 also all have two story porches on their fronts on Shenandoah Street.
HARPER'S FERRY, VA., 1862

Original photograph in National Archives Still Picture Section, Washington, D. C., CN-5079.
This photograph, Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-376 is a blowup made from HF-11.

Through the break in the bridge, from right to left, may be seen Bldgs. No. 9, 10, 11 and 12. Note that Bldg. No. 10 is a 2½ story structure and that Bldgs. No. 11 and 12 are both three story buildings. Bldgs. No. 10, 11 and 12 also all have two story porches on their fronts on Shenandoah Street.
"JOHN BROWN'S FORT."
HARPER'S FERRY.
1865.

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HP-55.

This photograph was probably made in 1865. The fort, armory walls and gates are all in their original location. Beyond these may be seen Bldg. No. 9 with five windows and one door in the east wall. Note the slate on the dormer windows. Just to the right of Bldg. 9 stands Bldg. 8 with three windows visible in the east wall. A fourth window, concealed by the Armory wall, was located in the basement of Bldg. No. 8 on this side.
JOHN BROWN FORT.
1930-1932.

Harpers Ferry Negative
Number HF-495.

Photograph made after 1869 flood and before the fort was removed from its original location in 1892. Bldg. No. 8 may be seen in the rear and just to the right of the John Brown Fort. Note the four windows in Bldg. No. 8 including one in the basement.
HARPERS FERRY, ABOUT 1870

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-45.

The huge armory building to the left is the Smith Shop. At the extreme right may be seen the John Brown fort in its original position. Just to the right of the fort stands Bldg. 8 and 9. Note the two dormer windows in the roof of Bldg. No. 8 and also the window in the top floor of the north wall.
HARPERS FERRY, 1864-1869

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-113.

Good view of the original windows in the rear or north wall of

Bldg. No. 9.
HARPERS FERRY, 1869-1892

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HP-58.

Note windows in rear of Bldg. No. 9. Also visible is roof and one
corner of Bldg. No. 8.
HARPERS FERRY, 1932

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-301.

View of "Dittmeyer's Drug Store," Bldg. No. 9, in 1932. Note how Bldg. No. 9 has been remodelled and Bldg. No. 8 reduced to one story. The John Brown Fort site marker is also visible to the right of Bldg. No. 9.
Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument

From: Regional Historian

Subject: Research Project No. HF-58, Historic Building Report, Part II, Historical Data Section, for Bldgs. 9 and 8

When this report is adapted as the Historical Data Section for the completed Part II, Historic Building Report, on these structures, the apparent discrepancies between the house frontage of 29' 2 5/8" (Page 3) and the lot frontage of 27 1/2' (Page 3) should be noted even if it cannot be explained. In Line 8, Page 10, should not "Wager Lot 9" read "Wager Lot 5"?

Frank Barnes
Regional Historian

In duplicate

Copy to: Director w/copy of Report
Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Acting Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument

Subject: Research Project No. HP-58, Historic Building Report, Part II, Historical Data Section, for Bldgs. No. 9 and 8

Historian Charles W. Snell has provided the following answers to the two questions raised by Regional Historian Frank Barnes in his memorandum of June 9 regarding the Historical Building Report, Part II-Historical Data Section for Bldgs. No. 9 and 8.

1. Apparent discrepancies between the house frontage of 29' 2 5/8" (page 3) and the lot frontage of 27' 1/2" (page 2) for Bldg. No. 9: The difference in frontage is "explained" on the 1846 plat on page 5 and at great length in the "Historic Building Report, Part I, for Bldgs. No. 9 and 8," dated January 30, 1958, pp. 3 and 4. The original frontage of the lot for Bldg. No. 9 was 27 1/2 feet in 1835 (see 1835 plat, page 2 of Part II). In erecting Bldg. No. 9, Foley inadvertently built over on the adjoining lot, Wager Lot No. 15-subdivision 3, about one foot and eight inches. This error was apparently discovered by the two owners of the lots in 1846 and was rectified by an exchange of land on June 6, 1846 (see plat, page 5 of Part II), thus giving the owner of Bldg. No. 9 full title to the land on which the structure already stood. As these details had been explained at some length in the Part I, and had no great bearing on the architectural history of Bldg. No. 9, Mr. Snell did not repeat the story in the Part II.

2. Line 8, page 10 should read "Wager Lot No. 5" (not Lot No. 9) as Mr. Barnes has suggested.

SIGNED,

James F. Devenport
Acting Superintendent

In quadruplet