

PART I

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

The Gerard Wager Buildings

(Buildings No. 9 and 8)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Distributed for Review by Region Five

HF-8

HF-41

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ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The Gerard Wager Buildings

(Buildings No. 9 and 8)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by
Acting Superintendent Raymond L. Ives
October 10, 1957

SECTION I: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Numbers of Buildings:

Buildings No. 9 and 8, "The Gerard Wager Buildings".

B. Proposed Use of Structures:

The exteriors of both Buildings No. 9 and 8 are to be restored to their 1859-1865 appearance and their interiors to be rehabilitated. The first floor windows of Building No. 9 will contain period window exhibits related to the 1859-65 use of the structure.

As the most suitable structure located close to the original site of the John Brown "Fort", it is planned to use the first floor of Building No. 9 as an interpretive center in which to tell the story of the John Brown Raid.

The second and third floors of Building No. 9 will be kept clear to use as storage space for the museum exhibits in case of flood.

C. Provisions for Operating the Houses:

No funds have yet been programmed for refurnishing the houses. No cooperative agreements have been executed or proposed for furnishing and operating the houses. Money will be required to establish the small period window exhibits and the interpretive center on the first floor of Building No. 9.

D. Preliminary Estimate of Cost of Rehabilitating the Structures and Grounds:

It is estimated that the total cost of restoring the exteriors of Buildings No. 9 and 8 and of rehabilitating their interiors will amount to \$75,000.

HISTORICAL DATA

The Gerard Wager Buildings
(Buildings No. 9 and 8)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by
Supervising Park Historian Charles W. Snell
October 10, 1957
(Rev. Jan. 30, 1958)

SECTION II: HISTORICAL DATA

Introduction: Part I of the Historic Building Report for Building No. 9^{and 8} has been prepared in accordance with Acting Regional Director Gibson's memorandum of September 17, 1957. This section is based on all presently available documentary data.

1. Ownership of the Land, 1835 to 1873.

On April 2, 1835 the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery for Jefferson County, Virginia, appointed Commissioners "to lay off and divide into three equal lots and parcels, the real estate at Harper's Ferry which descended to James B. Wager, Gerard B. Wager and Sally Ann Wager, now Sally Ann Swayne, the wife of Noah H. Swayne, from their father John ¹Wager, deceased." The property thus being divided at Harpers Ferry was commonly known as the "Wager Six Acre Reservation," an island of land in private ownership surrounded on all sides by land owned by the United States ²Government.

On October 10, 1835 the three Commissioners reported to the Court: " To Gerard B. Wager we allot and assign the following lots as designated G.B.W. & numbered in the annexed plat, to wit: Lots no 2-3-4-6-12-14-18-21-22-29-30-32-34-36-38-43-49-50-52 & 56." ³

1. Gibson, etc. vs Wager, etc. Decree. Deed Book 29, pp. 140-41. Jefferson County Clerk's Office, Charles Town, West Va.

2. 1835 Plat, "the Wager Six Acre Reservation, Drawn By James M. Brown, S.G.C.," in Deed Book 29, 1847-48, p.140. See Appendix I.

3. Deed Book 29, pp. 140-41.

Thus in 1835 Gerard B. Wager became the owner of Wager Lot No. 14 and it is upon Lot No. 14 that Buildings No. 9 and 8 stand today. (See Appendix I).

It was not until 1873 that the heirs of Gerard B. Wager sold Lot No. 14, and with it Buildings No. 9 and 8.⁴ Thus from 1835 to 1873 Gerard B. Wager remained the owner of Lot 14 and it is therefore suggested that Buildings No. 9 and 8 be called the "Gerard Wager Buildings".

2. Erection of Buildings No. 9 and 8.

The 1803 map, "Plan of the proposed junction of the CANAL at the Lower Falls of the Shenandoah with the Public Canal at HARPERS FERRY and the necessary Locks for descending into the Potomak River," dated Feb. 1803,⁵ (See Appendix II) shows a building standing on the approximate site of Building No. 9.

A large single building covering the present sites of Buildings 9, 10, 11 and 12 is delineated on the 1835 map, "Harpers Ferry Showing the Location of the Winchester and Potomac Railroad, Drawn By Lieut White, Allen, and R. S. Smith, U.S. Army under the direction of James Kearney, Lt. Col. and T.E., 1835, Map 2."⁶ This map is reproduced as a part of the Harpers Ferry Master Plan, Drawing NM-HF 3002, sheet 2 of 3.

4. February 6, 1873, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book A, p.46.

5. National Archives R.G.77-Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortification Map File, Part of Map: Dr. 150-sheet 1. Reproduced as part of Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF 3004.

6. National Archives R.G. 77-Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortification Map File. Part of Map: Dr. 150, sheet 82 -2 .

This evidence indicates that there was probably a building standing on Wager Lot 14, the site of Building No. ⁹~~24~~, in 1835 and perhaps as early as 1803.

In any case, the following evidence clearly shows that there was a three story brick house standing on the site of Building 9 on May 30, 1846 and that Building No. 8 may also have been standing at that time. For \$100 paid by Philip Coons to Gerard B. Wager, Coons and Wager exchanged the following land (see Appendix III):

"Whereas Gerard B. Wager and Philip Coons are the owners the owners of two lots or parcels of land lying and being at Harpers Ferry,... contiguous to each other upon Shenandoah Street, and known and designated upon the map or plat of the lands of the heirs of Jno Wager, deed as number fourteen and as number three of lot number fifteen, the said Gerard B. Wager being the owner of the first and the said Philip Coons being the owner of the second mentioned, and the boundary line between these two lots intersecting the street in their front not at right angles but obliquely, and the said boundary line being on that account inconvenient and disadvantageous to both parties hereto, they have agreed to change the same and to substitute therefore the lines and boundaries herein and hereafter mentioned and described... that the boundary lines between these two lots shall hereafter be as follows: beginning at a point in the front line of Lot number three of lot fifteen about two 10/12 feet westwardly from the corner common to both in said front line, and running thence in a north westernly direction along and parallel to the south western side of the south western gable of the three story brick house (Building No. 9) upon the lot of the said Gerard B. Wager to the western corner of said building, thence in a straight line at right angles to the first line five feet, thence in a line at right angles to the second line and parallel to the first Forty seven 6/12 feet to an Iron bolt driven in the ground, thence at right angles to the last line thirty seven inches to another Iron bolt in the ground, thence in a straight line and in a northwardly direction fourteen 4/12 feet to another bolt set in the back line of lot number fourteen fifty 9/12 feet from the wall supposed to be on the U.S. Line, fifteen 2/12 feet from the southern and thirty 1/12 feet from the eastern corner of William Anderson Warehouse (Building No. 7)...."

Wager give to Coons:

"...in and to so much of lot number fourteen before mentioned as lies west and south of the boundary line herein and before described as agreed upon between the parties hereto, to have and to hold that part of said lot number fourteen lying west and south of said boundary line..."

And Coons gave to Wager:

"...to so much of said lot number three of lot number fifteen as lines north and east of said boundary lines herein and before mentioned and described..."

Gerard B. Wager also agreed that Philip Coons:

"...shall have the privilege of building against the south western side of the south western gable wall of said main building (Building No. 9) of said Wager, and of placing upon and against the said gable wall such lumber and materials as shall be necessary and proper for that purpose, provided that said Philip Coons shall not by any means nor in any manner weaken, impair, or injuriously affect the strength of said wall, nor said building, nor penetrate said gable wall further than seven inches..." 7

This deed may indicate that Wager's building, Building No. 9, stood two feet 10 inches, on Shenandoah Street, on Coons lot at that date. The deed also give the location of the northwest corner of Building 9 in 1846 and from its mention of the main building of Wager, infers that other buildings were probably standing on Wager's lot at that time.

The map, dated May 9, 1866, "A Sketch of the Present Position & Proposed Alteration of the line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad at Harper's Ferry,"⁸ (see Appendix IV) definitely shows a building standing at that date on the site of Building No. 9, and also an annex attached to the main building, on the site of Building No. 8.

7. May 30, 1846, Deed of Exchange, Deed Book 28, pp. 144-45.

8. National Archives R.G. 77, Dr. 150-sheet 54.

§ 3. HISTORICAL USE OF BUILDINGS NO. 9 and 8.

The uses of Buildings No. 9 and 8 in the period 1859 to 1865 remains to be established by further research in the newspapers of that period.

4. Measured Drawings of Buildings No. 9 and 8.

No historical or modern measured drawings of Buildings No. 9 and 8 are presently available, with the exception of Drawing No. NM-HF 3063, 2 sheets, for the roof of Building No. 9.

Report written by:

Charles W. Snell,
Historian (Park Supervisory)

from primary data
collected by:

Herbert B. Kissling,
Park Historian

Dated: October 10, 1957.

APPENDIX I

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE 1835 WAGER PLAT

PUBLIC

LAND

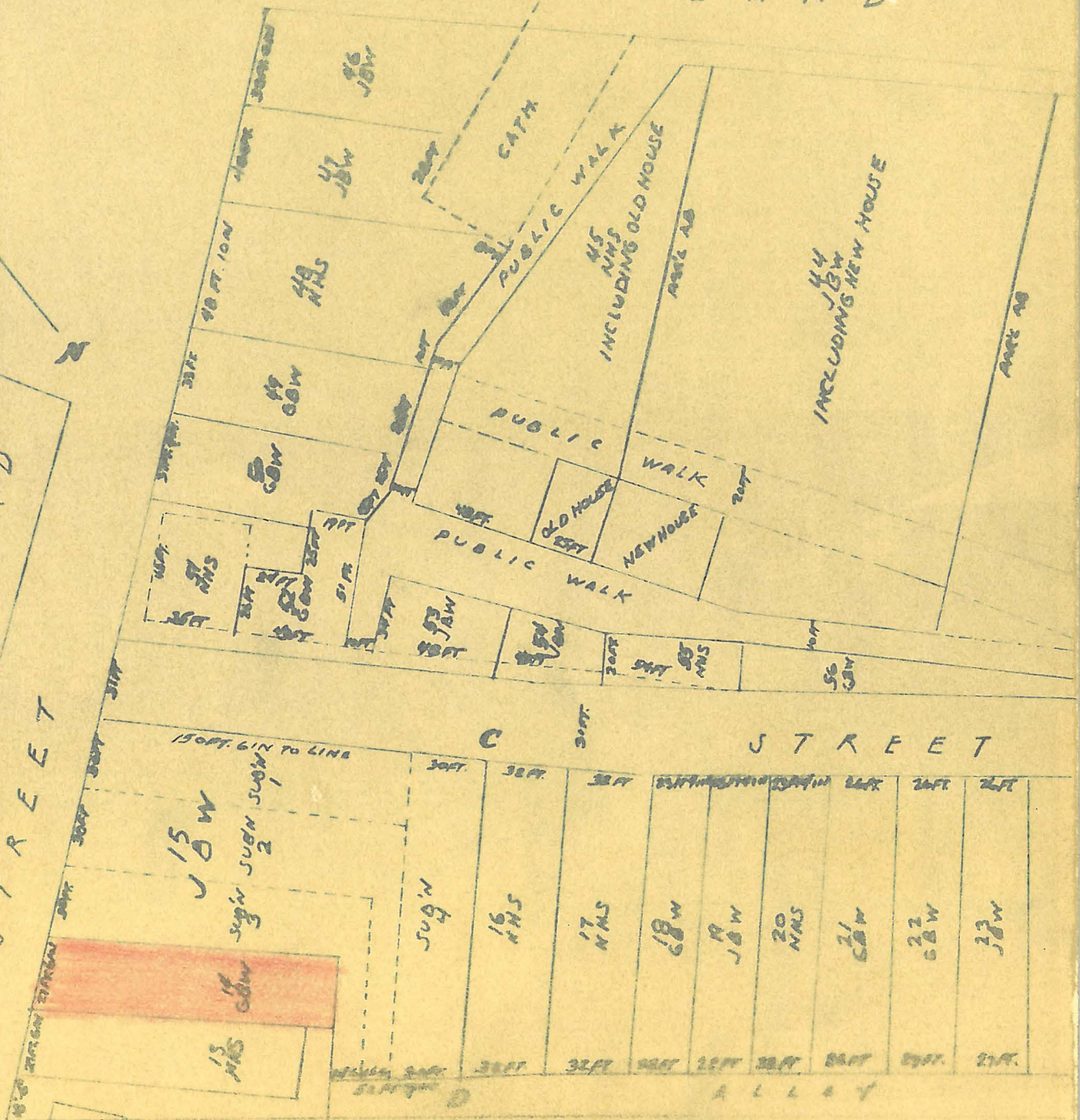
IRON BOLT

ARSENAL YARD

STREET

C

STREET



SCALE 1" = 60 FT.

NOTION OF TRACING OF
1031 PLAT
PLATS. TRACED FROM THE
ORIGINAL IN THE
COUNTY COURT HOUSE BY
W. J. BROWN.

APPENDIX II

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE 1803 MAP

Towers

Present Road

Stable

Garden

Stable

Artillery shed

Arsenal

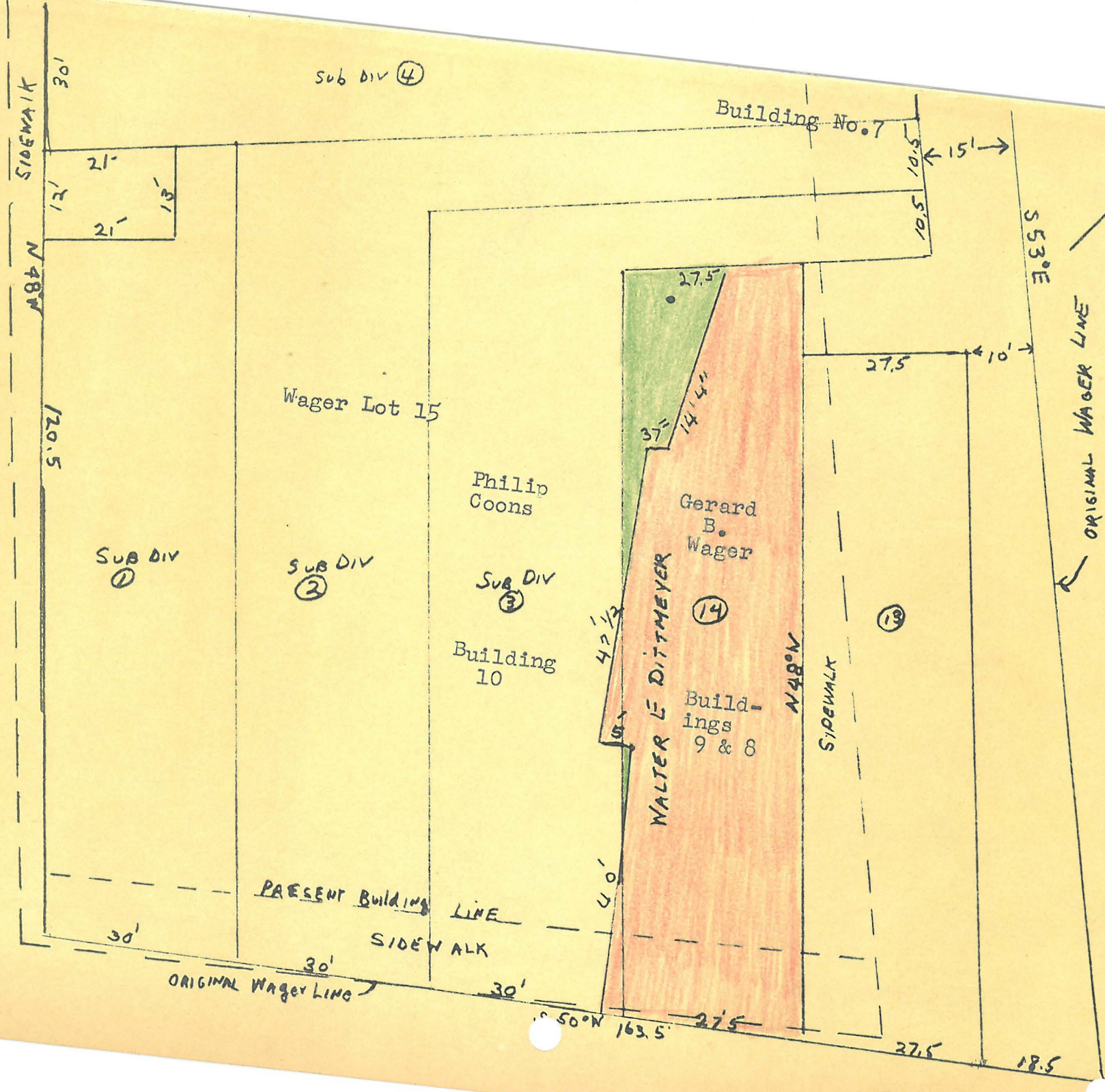
Tracing of a Portion of the 1803 Map
of Fort Mifflin, Susquehanna, Pa. perches to an Inch.

APPENDIX III

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE DITTMAYER PLAT

(Plat found in Building No. 9)

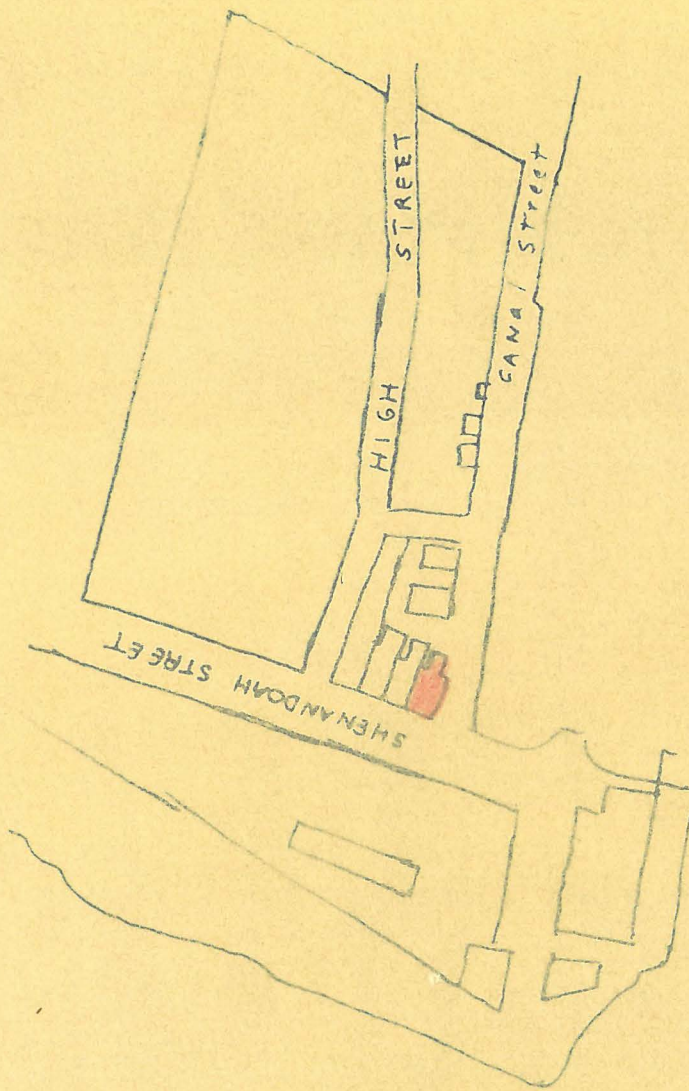
High St



APPENDIX IV

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE B. & O. R.R. MAP

May 9, 1866



Tracing of A Portion of
the B. & O. R.R. Map
of Harpers Ferry,
May 9, 1866

APPENDIX V

PHOTOGRAPHS

"Contraband Camp - Harper's Ferry, Va.

(made 1862 - 1865)

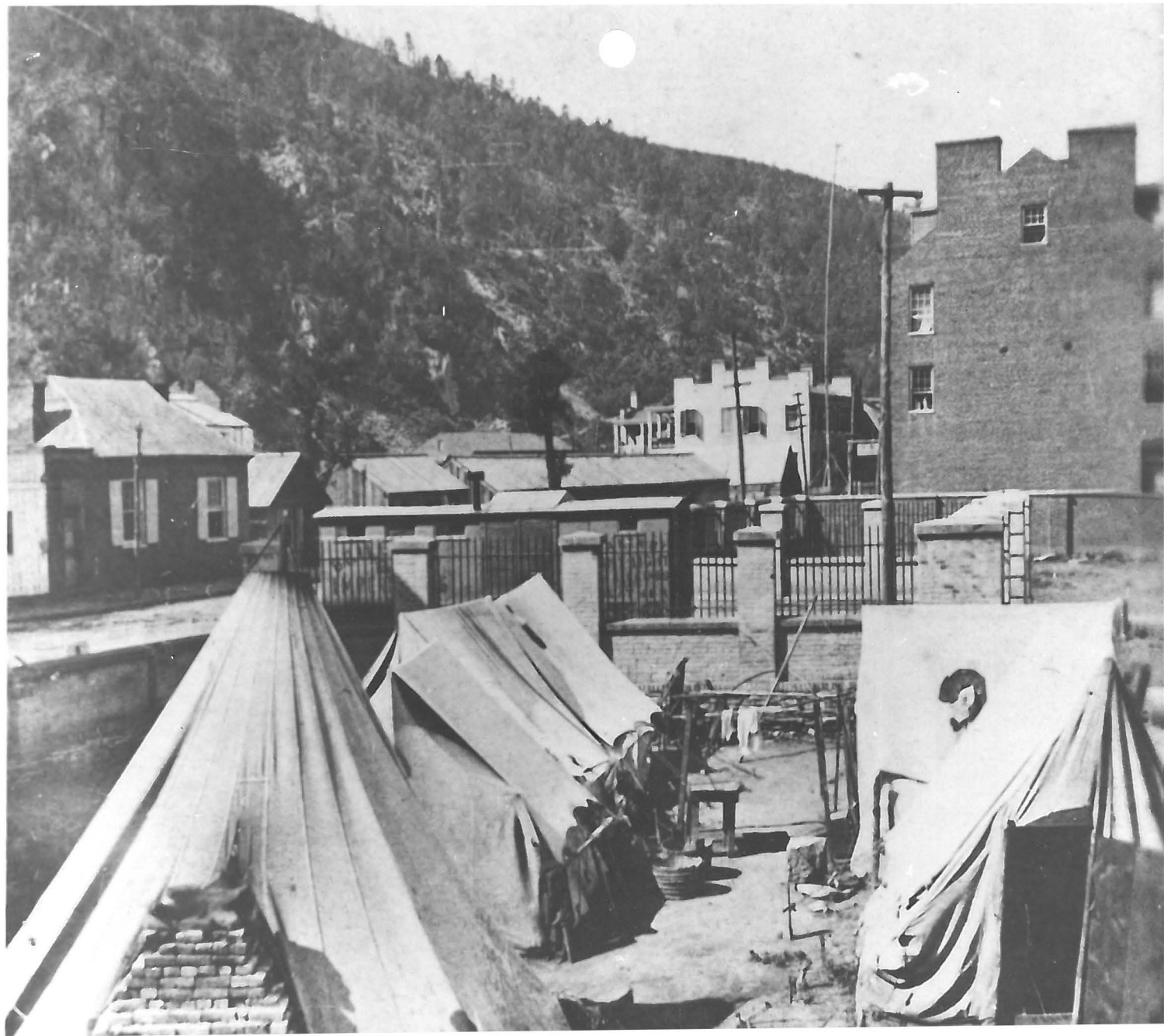
Building No. 9 is the large Building located directly beyond the tents in the foreground, and to the right. Building No. 8 is also visible in part. Building No. 36 is located across the street.

U.S. Signal Corps Collection, Order No. SC-107368, National Archives Still Picture Section. Copied from original prints of the Civil War period from estate of James Down Johnston, Captain, 8th Michigan Cavalry.

Harpers Ferry N. M. Negative No. HF-18

Note: for other early photographs of Buildings No. 8 and 9, see

1. Historic Building Report, Part I, for Building No. 36, page 20, for a 1865 sketch showing more of the front of Building No. 9.
2. Historic Building Report, Part I, for Building No. 5, page 11, for 1889 flood view showing Building No. 8 and 9.
3. Historic Building Report, Part I, for Building No. 7, page 11, for 1889-1892 view showing Building No. 8 and part of Building No. 9.



5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Since this report was first submitted on October 10, 1957, additional documentary evidence has been discovered that definitely dates the construction of Building No. 9. On February 21, 1836, Gerard B. Wager leased to Michael Foley a "Tenement" (probably Building No. 9) on Wager Lot No. 14, "then in the possession of and occupancy of N. Fitzsimmons, being part of lot no. 14 and adjoining the lot (Wager Lot No. 13) recently rented by John G. Wilson." Foley was to have lot No. 14 and the tenement for eight years, starting from April 1, 1836, for the annual rent of \$1. It was agreed that Foley "should erect upon lot # 14 a good and substantial house of brick or stone, three stories high above the basement and not than forty feet deep and covering the whole front of the lot, 27½ feet.

On January 18, 1840, Michael Foley assigned to John O'Hara, for \$500¹⁰ all his rights under this lease to Lot No. 14. To secure this sale, O'Hara, on the same day, put into trust as security for Foley, Lot No. This trust reads in part: "Foley has this day sold to O'Hara his interest in and two certain premises at Harpers Ferry known as Lot No. 14, said interest being derived and held under ~~to~~ a lease bearing dated on February 21, 1836 from Gerard B. Wager to said Michael Foley..."¹¹ O'Hara completed his payments for the purchase of this lease on December 2, 1842.¹²

9. Assignment of Lease, Foley to O'Hara, January 18, 1840, Deed Book 20 pp. 157-158.

10. Ibid.

11. Deed of Trust, O'Hara to Isaac Fouke, January 18, 1840, Deed Book 1 pp. 63-64.

12. Release of Trust, Fouke to O'Hara, December 5, 1842, Deed Book 26, pp. 170-171.

On January 10, 1841, John G. Wilson, located on adjacent Lot No. 1 in putting some of his problems into legal form, offered us the following information on Building No. 9: Wilson, in locating his own building, stated it was "opposite the arsenal yard and adjoining the house built by Michael Foley, now owned by Jas. O'Hara, on the south (Wager Lot No. 14)." ¹³

Thus Building No. 9 (the only building with anywhere near 27½ feet by 40 feet dimensions on lot no. 14 - see the Architectural Base Map, Drawing No. NM HF-3055) must therefore have been designed and constructed by Michael Foley between the years 1836 and 1839. The original frontage of Wager Lot No. 14 was 27½ feet; the Architectural Base Map gives Building No. 9 today an actual frontage of 29 feet. Through error, Architect must have built out 1½ feet on to the next lot, Wager Lot 15, subdividing thus explaining the necessity of the 1846 exchange of land between George Wager and Philip Coons, as presented on pages 3 and 4 of this report.

A comparison of the data included in the 1846 exchange of land, particularly the boundary line from Shenandoah Street "to the western corner" of G. Wager's Building, see page 3, with the Plat in Appendix III, page 8 of this report, indicates that the original depth of Building No. 9 was forty feet. Building No. 8 must therefore have had an original length of 30 feet and apparently was the "tenement" standing on Lot No. 14 as mentioned in the 1836 lease to Foley.

To carry this story down to 1846, in November 1844, John O'Hara sold William Lester one undivided moiety in the lease to Wager Lot No. 14. ¹⁴

13. Deed of Trust, John G. Wilson to Edward Lucas, January 10, 1841, Deed Book 24, pp.458-460.

14. Deed of Trust, November 9, 1844, Deed Book 27, p.136.

And on August 14, 1845, for \$875.00, Gerard B. Wager purchased from W
Lester, Lester's one half interest in the lease to "a certain house at
... designated as number 14..."¹⁵ On March 31, 1846, Gerard Wager, for
\$1,000, acquired John O'Hara's remaining half interest in the lease to
the house and lot known as Lot No. 14.¹⁶

Further Research Required. A careful and complete search of the news
from 1830 to 1861 will give us a complete chain of the uses of Building
No. 9 and 8 from the time of erection to the Civil War. The same source
may also yield some data on the construction of Building No. 8. The U
Censuses for 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1860 will also yield background data on
the owners and occupiers of these buildings. Correspondence of the U.
Armory also contains considerable data on "Architect" and businessman
Michael Foley; this information is now on order from the National
Archives.

Historical Significance, Restoration and Reconstruction:

Both Buildings No. 9 and 8 were definitely a part of the 1859-1865
historic scene, being located adjacent to the original site of the "John
Brown Fort". As far as is now known, however, the buildings were not
closely associated with the John Brown Raid in 1859, other than perhaps
being struck by bullets from the Raider's guns. It is therefore recommended
that the exterior of Buildings No. 9 and 8 be restored to their 1859
appearance. It is also believed that the exterior of Building No. 9,
the main, is substantially as it was in 1859. Therefore only restoration
and not reconstruction, will be required on the exterior of this structure.

15. Deed of B. & S., March-3 August 14, 1845, Deed Book 27, pp. 378-379.
16. Deed of B. & S., March 31, 1846, Deed Book, 28, pp. 96-97.

In the case of Building No. 8, a large part of this building as it exists today, was erected after the Civil War, utilizing in part only, older sections of the structure. It is recommended that the new section of 8 be torn down, and the older portion preserved. In the case of Building No. 8, reconstruction will largely be required, but it is recommended that surviving portions be saved, not that 8 be rebuilt into the original two story wing or annex, similar in size and shape to 11-A and the ruin of 10-A. (For a good look at Building No. 8, as it originally was, see the Bachrach Photo of the John Brown Fort, as printed in the free fold for Harpers Ferry National Monument).

Monument Use of Buildings No. 9 and 8:

Building No. 9 and 8 are located close to the original location of the John Brown Fort, to which site the National Park Service hopes to return the Fort. It is therefore recommended that the first floor of Building No. 9 be utilized as an interpretive center, during the heavy travel season, as the most suitable point to tell the story of the John Brown Raid. The choice of this building is based on the following factors:

1. Most visitors approach the Monument from 340(Route) by following scenic road along the bank of the Shenandoah River. They will therefore leave their cars at the parking area near Building No. 45, and proceed on foot into the Town.

2. As they walk down the street, they will pass some ten period store and house exhibits, besides exhibits in Building No. 36 relating to the Armory story, before they can reach the Fort. It is self-evident that the detailed Raid story is presented at the beginning of this tour, so visitors will have forgotten the larger part of it, through first seeing

the many other points of interest, by the time they have reached the Fort. It is therefore believed that the story should be told at a point close to the Fort, but not in the Fort itself; museum exhibits in the Fort being considered an undesirable intrusion.

Under this plan, no restoration or reconstruction work would be undertaken on the interior of Building No. 9, but the inside should be rehabilitated for use as an interpretive center. I suggest that the first floor be used for the exhibits, the second floor save as storage space for these exhibits in the event of floods, and the third floor, etc., be stripped down to a shell on the interior.

Limitations of interpretive staff will probably make it impossible to keep more than one interpretive center open in the winter months, and travel is relatively light. It is therefore suggested that the Building No. 9 exhibits be designed with the idea that a few containing the key ideas could be moved into Building No. 36, which has, or shortly will have, a heating plant, during the cold season of the year. Building No. 9 would thus function as a seasonal museum. Visitor rest rooms for the Fort and Building No. 9, under this plan, would be located in Buildings No. 6 and 7.

If for any reason, this above-suggested plan is not adopted, I then suggest that a period-store exhibit be installed on the first floor of Building No. 9, to be viewed by visitors through the windows from the street. In other words, visitors would not actually enter the building thus reducing the protection problems. Under this alternative plan, the second floor would be saved for exhibit storage in case of flood, and the remaining floors would be stripped to a shell. All interior

restoration work would therefore be strictly limited to the first floor of Building No. 9.

If, however, it is decided to use Building No. 9 as an interpretive center, work on this building should be given a high priority if the structure is to be utilized by October 1959, in connection with the 100th anniversary of the John Brown Raid. Measured drawings of Buildings 9 and 8 yet remain to be done, and these should be made before any alterations of these structures is undertaken. A museum prospectus, based in part on space available in Building No. 9, must also be prepared well in advance, if the exhibits are to be in place by the fall of 1959.

Charles W. Snell

Charles W. Snell,
Historian (Park Supervisory)
January 30, 1958