

HF-285

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT
PART II-HISTORICAL DATA SECTION,
FOR

BLDG. NO. 48A, ST. JOHN'S
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1847-1895

Harpers Ferry National Monument

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Dated May 25, 1959
11 Pages
Project No. HF-81

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1. OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, 1796-1868

The Protestant Episcopal Church Lot was owned by the United States Government from 1796 to 1868. From 1818 until 1845 the lot was leased by the United States to the congregation of the Free Church. From January 16, 1851, to December 15, 1868, the lot was next leased by the United States to the congregation of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The location of the church lot may be seen on S. Howell Brown's 1852 Map of Harpers Ferry which appears on the following page of this report.

Title to the lot was granted to the Protestant Episcopal Church by an Act of Congress on December 15, 1868.¹

2. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1851-1853

The congregation that was to build St. John's Episcopal Church was apparently organized by 1847 as the group first held services in the hall where the Sons of Temperance met.² This room was located on the second floor of the Market House, Block B, Shenandoah Street, and the Market House was erected in 1846-47.³ By 1849 services were held in the Superintendent's old office, located on Lot 1, Block A, Shenandoah Street.⁴ The ladies of

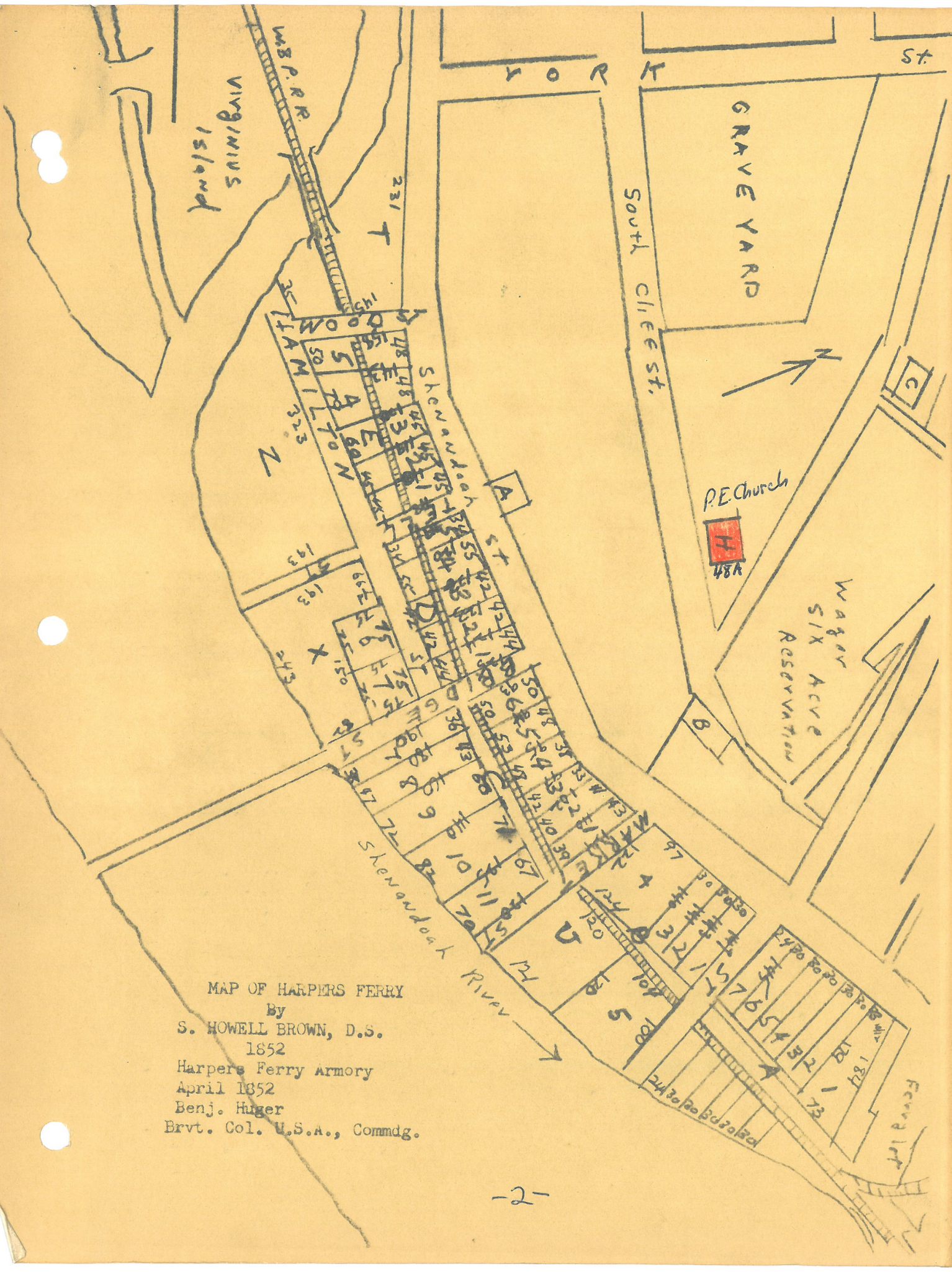
1. Smith, Jr., Philip R., "Historic Building Report, Part I, for Bldg. No. 48A, St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church," dated October 23, 1958, revised May 6, 1959, pp.1-6.

2. A History and Record of the Protestant Church in the Diocese of West Virginia, and Before the Formation of the Diocese in 1878, in the Territory now Known as the State of West Virginia, Compiled, arranged and Contributed by George W. Peterkin, 1902, The Tribune Company, Printers, Charleston, W. Va., pp.615-616; See Appendix I.

3. Ibid.; Smith, Jr., Philip R., "History of the Market House, 1846-1869, Block B, Shenandoah Street," December 19, 1958, revised May 1, 1959, p.3.

4. Smith, Philip R., Jr., "History of the Superintendent's Old Office, 1833-1869, Arsenal Square, Block A, Lot 1, Shenandoah Street," March 31, 1959, revised April 29, 1959.

MAP OF HARPERS FERRY
 By
 S. HOWELL BROWN, D.S.
 1852
 Harpers Ferry Armory
 April 1852
 Benj. Huger
 Brvt. Col. U.S.A., Commdg.



the Protestant Episcopal Congregation held a church fair in the week of December 20, 1849, to raise funds for the construction of a new church.⁵ The congregation, under the name of St. John's, was admitted into the Diocese in 1850.⁶ Construction was started on the St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church in 1851 and they apparently planned to utilize the ruined walls of the old Free Church, which had been destroyed by fire in 1845. These walls, however, were found to be unsafe and were thus torn down. The church building therefore was reconstructed from the ground up. The building was finished in 1852 and consecrated in 1853.⁷

The church was approximately 37 by 60 feet in size, and was 17 feet high to the eaves, with wood shingle roof.⁸ It was a one story building with basement, constructed of field stone with concrete facing. Prior to 1865 there was a small annex at the rear of the church that probably contained the altar; this was later removed, but there is still physical evidence on the rear of the building today that indicated that the annex was once there. A belfry was added to the structure after the Civil War.

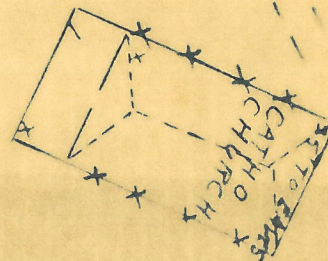
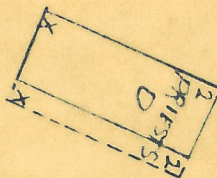
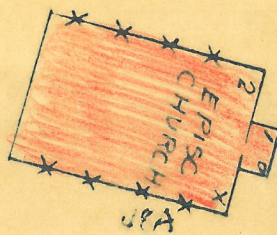
There was a window set high in the front wall that probably lighted the rafters of the building. There were four large windows in either side wall of the building with four smaller ones in the basement. A flight of

5. Virginia Free Press, December 20, 1849, p.3, c.3.

6. History and Record of the Protestant Episcopal Church, p.615.

7. Ibid., pp.615-616.

8. Perris-Sanborn Map Company, Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia, November, 1894; see next page of this report for map.



CHURCH

ST

N

SANBORN-PERRIS MAP CO.
HARPERS FERRY
NOVEMBER, 1894

SHENANDOAH
STREET

-4-

stairs led up to the front door through a one story porch from Church Street;
evidences of the entrance remain today.

The building was so badly wrecked during the Civil War that only the
walls and the roof were left standing in 1865. The church was rebuilt
in 1882 at a cost of \$1,200. Due to declining population and a shift
in location of the largest part of the membership, the old church was sold
May, 1895 and a new building was constructed in the western part of Harpers
Ferry, close to Bolivar, at a cost of \$1,000.

3. USE OF THE BUILDING, NO. 48A

The St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church was consecrated in 1853
and was used from that time until the Civil War as a place of worship.
The building was wrecked during the war and it was not until 1882 that the
church was rebuilt and worship resumed in the building. The building
continued to be used as a church until at least May, 1895.

A list of the ministers that served the church includes; Rev. Dr.
Andrews of Shepherdstown, 1846-1853; Rev. Horace Stringfellow; Rev. Mr.
Wilconson, Rev. Charles Ambler of Charles Town, Rev. Richard Davis of
Martinsburg; after the Civil War; Rev. Richard T. Leavell; Rev. Landon R.
Mason; Rev. William H. Meade, DD; Rev. W. L. Gravatt; and Rev. C. E. Shaw.

9. Photographs: HF-64; HF-46; HF-240; HF-6; HF-11; HF-449; HF-55; HF-25;
HF-43; HF-379; HF-99; HF-95; HF-486; HF-384; HF-983; in Appendix I of ~~this~~
report, Part I, Bldg. 48A.

10. History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, . p.616.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

4. HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs showing St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church will be found in the Smith, Jr., Philip R., "Historic Building Report, Part I, for Bldg. No. 48A, St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church," revised May 6, 1959, on the following pages:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. 1859, HF-64, p.16. | 9. 1870-1875, HF-43, p.24. |
| 2. 1861, HF-46, p.17. | 10. 1880-1892, HF-379, p.25. |
| 3. 1861, HF-240, p.18. | 11. 1892-1896, HF-99, p.26. |
| 4. ca. 1861-1865, HF-6, p.19. | 12. 1892-1896, HF-95, p.27. |
| 5. 1862, HF-11, p.20. | 13. 1896-1910, HF-486, p.28. |
| 6. 1865, HF-449, p.24. | 14. 1910, HF-384, p.29. |
| 7. 1870, HF-55, p.22. | 15. 1956, HF-983, p.30. |
| 8. 1870, HF-25, p.23. | |

5. HISTORICAL PLANS OF BLDG. NO. 48A

No historical plans of Bldg. 48A have been found and it is unlikely that any will ever be found. Modern measured drawings of this structure have yet to be prepared.

6. SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DATA

A. Ownership of the Land

The Protestant Episcopal Church Lot was owned by the United States Government from 1796 to 1868. From 1818 until 1845 the lot was leased by the United States to the congregation of the Free Church. From January, 1851 to December 15, 1868, the lot was next leased by the United States to the congregation of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Title to the lot was granted to the Protestant Episcopal Church by

an act of Congress on December 15, 1868.

B. Constructing the Building

Construction on the Protestant Episcopal Church was started in 1851 and it apparently was originally planned to utilize the ruined stone walls of the old Free Church in the new church. These walls, however, were found unsafe and had to be torn down. Construction was resumed and the church was completed in 1852.

The church was a one story building with basement and was constructed of field stone with concrete facing. Its dimensions were approximately $37\frac{1}{2}$ by 60 feet, and was seventeen feet high to the eaves.

Prior to 1865 there was a small annex at the rear of the church that probably contained the altar; this was later removed, but there is evidence on the rear of the church today to indicate that it was once there. There was no belfry on the structure before the Civil War.

There was a window set high in the front wall that probably lighted the rafters of the building. There were four large windows in either side wall of the building with four small ones in the basement. A flight of steps led up to the front door through a one story porch from Church Street.

The building was so badly damaged during the Civil War that only the walls and the roof were left. The old church was rebuilt in 1882 at a cost of \$1,200 and used as such until about May, 1895, when the buildings was sold and a new church was built on top of Camp Hill, close to Bolivar.

C. Use of the Building

The building was consecrated in 1853 and used as a church for the Protestant Episcopal Congregation of Harpers Ferry from 1853 until 1861.

The building was badly damaged during the Civil War and it was not until 1882, when the church was repaired^e, that religious services were resumed in the building. The structure was then utilized as a church from 1882 until May, 1895, when the congregation moved to the new church and Bldg. 48A was sold.

Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Philip R. Smith, Jr.
Historian
May 25, 1959

APPENDIX I

A History and Record of the Protestant Episcopal
Church in the Diocese of West Virginia, and Be-
fore the Formation of the Diocese in 1878, in the
Territory now Known as the State of West Virginia

The Church began with an organization of five communicants. The Rev. Dr. Andrews, Rector, at Shepherdstown, held service twice a month— first in the old Temperance Hall (1) and later in the Armory pay-office. (2) The Church under the name of St. John's was admitted into union with the Diocese in 1850. The work prospered so greatly that, in 1853, twenty-six persons were confirmed at one time by Bishop Meade. The old church, (3) looking down upon the flowing waters, suggestive of immortality, like Zion of old, "beautiful for situation, was begun in 1851. The walls being condemned, (4) were torn down, but the people had a mind to work," and so indefatigable were their labors that the church was re-built and furnished in 1852. It was consecrated in 1853. Rev. Dr. Andrews was succeeded by the Rev. Horace Stringfellow, after which the Rev. Mr. Wilcoson took charge. The Rev. Charles Ambler, Rector of Zion Church, Charlestown, preached in St. Johns, from time to time, and also the Rev. Richard Davis, Rector of Trinity, Martinsburg. During the war which followed, the church building was so badly wrecked that only the walls and roof remained. The organization, itself, was so scattered and disbanded that, for a considerable period, no regular services were maintained. To that honored veteran, the Rev. William T. Leavell, belongs the credit of gathering the fragments of this scattered congregation, and of again organizing the work. He also secured from the government the lot on which the rectory, built in 1899 now stands. The Church was afterwards served by the Rev. Landon R. Mason, of Shepherdstown, and the Rev. William H. Meade, D.D., the Rev. Dallas Tucker and the Rev. W. L. Gravatt, of Charlestown. While Mr. Tucker had charge of the work, he was assisted by Mr. Jeff. R. Taylor, then a lay-reader. On January 1st, 1889, the Rev. W. B. Everett, M. D., began to minister as assistant to the Rev. Landon R. Mason, and, upon the resignation of the latter, continued in charge until July 1st, 1895. The Church was then served by the Rev. W. L. Gravatt, of Charlestown, with the help of his assistants, the Rev. W. P. Chrisman and the Rev. C. E. Shaw. After the consecration of Mr. Gravatt, as Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese, the work was left in the hands of the Rev. C. E. Shaw, who has continued in charge to this writing.

The old church was re-built in 1882, at a cost of \$1,200, but, after a few years it was made to appear that this building was uncomfortable, and inaccessible. Many of its communicants, also, removed to other parts of the town: consequently the Church did not prosper here. With the approval of the Bishop, it was decided to abandon the site and find a more suitable location. A desirable lot, on the principal street, in the western part of the town, and in close proximity to Bolivar, was secured, and a beautiful, modern church erected at a cost of about \$1,000. The old church was sold May, 1895, and the corner-stone of the new St. John's Church was laid in November of the same year. On June 1st, 1896, the new church was first occupied, and was furnished with beautiful oak pews, in the spring of 1898. The consecration of St. John's Church was on March 19th, 1899, by the Bishop of the Diocese. The consecration sermon was preached by the Rev. George A. Gibbons of Romney.

Compiled, arranged and Contributed by George W. Peterkin, 1902, The Tribune Company, Printers, Charleston, W. Va. pp.615-616.

NOTES

(1) The Sons of Temperance Meeting Hall was located on the second floor of the Market House, Block B, Shenandoah Street. As this structure was completed in 1847 and is mentioned as the first meeting place of the congregation, this would seem to indicate that the group was organized about 1847 or 1848.

(2) This is incorrect; the group was actually meeting in the Superintendent's Old Office, which was located on Lot No. 1, Block A, Shenandoah Street, in 1849.

(3) The reference to the "Old Church" can only refer to the ruined stone walls of the Free Church which had occupied this site from 1825-27 to 1845, when the Free Church was destroyed by fire.

(4) This remark would seem to indicate that the Congregation apparently intended originally to utilize the ruined stone walls of the old Free Church in the new church.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Harpers Ferry National Monument
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

May 26, 1959

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAY 27 1959		
☐	REG. DIRECTOR	
☐	ASST. REG. DIR.	
☐	OPERATIONS	
☒	INTERPRETATION	
☐	ADM.	
☐	REC. RES. PLAN	
☐	RANGER ACT'S	
☐		
☐		
☐		

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument

Subject: Research Project No. HF-81, Part II-Historical Data
Section, Bldg. No. 48A

Enclosed please find four copies of the "Historic
Building Report, Part II-Historical Data Section, for Bldg.
No. 48A, St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1847-1895,"
dated May 25, 1959, 11 pages, as prepared by Historian
Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Frank H. Anderson

Frank H. Anderson
Superintendent

In duplicate

Enclosures