

PART I

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

The Stephenson Buildings
(Buildings No. 12 and 12A)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Distributed for Review by Region Five

HF-5

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

**The Stephenson Buildings
(Buildings No. 12 and 12A)**

Harpers Ferry National Monument

**Prepared by
Acting Superintendent Raymond L. Ives
October 8, 1957**

HISTORICAL DATA

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Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by
Supervising Park Historian Charles W. Snell
October 8, 1957
(Rev. Feb. 3, 1958)

APPROVAL SHEET

Recommended:

Director

Recommended:

Regional Director

Recommended:

Chief, E.O.D.C.

Approved:

Superintendent

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SECTION I: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Numbers of Buildings:

Buildings No. 12 and 12A, "The Stephenson Buildings".

B. Proposed Use of Structures:

The exteriors of Buildings No. 12 and 12A are to be restored to their 1859-1865 appearance and the interiors of both buildings are to be rehabilitated. The first floor store windows of Building No. 12 will be restored as a store of the 1859-65 period which visitors may view from the street but they will not actually enter the structure.

The second and third floors of Building No. 12 afford ample room for office space.

The first and second floors of Building No. 12A will be utilized as the Architect's Office and Drafting Room.

C. Provisions for Operating the Houses:

No funds have yet been programed for refurnishing the house. No cooperative agreements have been executed or proposed for furnishing and operating the houses. Money will be required to establish the small period store museum exhibit that will be located on the first floor of Building No. 12.

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

1. It is estimated that the cost of restoring the exterior and rehabilitating the interior of Building No. 12 will amount to-----\$60,000.

2. It is estimated that the cost of restoring the the exterior and rehabilitating the interior of Building No. 12A will amount to-----\$ 20,000

Estimated Total Cost for Buildings 12 & 12A----- \$ 80,000

SECTION II: HISTORICAL DATA

Introduction: Part I of the Historic Building Report for Buildings No. 12 and 12A has~~y~~ 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 1870.

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 Wager, deceased."¹ 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 Government.²

On October 10, 1835 the three Commissioners reported to the Court: "To James B. Wager we allot & assign the following lots as designated J.B. W. & numbered in the annexed Plat, viz. Lots No. 1-7-9-15 being a part of the old tavern lot - 19-23-25-27-37-39-41-44 including the new buildings recently

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.

attached to the mansion -46-47-53 & 54." The Court further appointed a special receiver for the Court to take into possession the share assigned to James B. Wager for the purpose of collecting rents on this land to be paid into the Court, "from and after the time the said (James B.) Wager took benefit of the insolvent laws..."³

On January 14, 1836, the Court appointed two Commissioners and directed them to sell at public auction to the highest bidder the real estate of James B. Wager in Harpers Ferry. On November 26, 1836 the Court further authorized the Commissioners to divide Lot No. 15, the old tavern lot, into parcels. Lot No. 15 was therefore subdivided into four lots marked No. 1, 2, 3, and 4, of Lot No. 15.⁴

Probably on October 28, 1837 and certainly by April 29, 1842(the complete Deed is missing, see footnote 5), subdivision No. 1 of Lot No. 15 was sold to Ann C. Stephenson, of Harpers Ferry,⁵ Buildings No. 12 and 12A, today, occupy the major portion of Wager Lot 15 - subdivision 1.

Sometime between 1837 and 1865, probably the 1837-1848 period, Ann C. Stephenson apparently sold a portion of Lot 15 subdivision 1 to William Anderson, owner of Lot 15 - subdivision 2.⁶ The deed covering this transaction has not yet been located.

3. Deed Book No. 29, pp. 140-41.

4. February 8, 1841, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book 24, pp. 457-58.

5. April 29, 1842, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book 25, p. 512. Only part of the first page of this deed remains in the Deed Book. There is a note to the effect that when the Index was being made in 1880 this book contained only 512 pages, with some page evidently having been torn out during or just after the Civil War.

6. June 24, 1865, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book 1, pp. 9-10.

On October 12, 1857 Mrs. Stephenson sold the following land to Alfred Burton for \$100: (See Appendix II)

"Beginning at the north west corner of subdivision 1 of Lot 15... thence along the front of said subdivision Lot 1, on High Street Twelve (12) feet to a point and stake in said line, the corner of the wooden building now occupied as a shop by Geo. W. Fordney (this probably refers to the present site of Building No. 13), thence North East Twenty one feet (21) to a stake, thence north Thirteen feet (13), to the outline boundary of said subdivision 1: thence 21 feet to the beginning being the northwest corner of said subdivided Lot 1, of the shape and dimensions above named..." 7

In 1870 the heirs of Ann C. Stephenson sold the property on which Buildings No. 12 and 12A now stand; the deed reading in part:

"...all that piece or parcel of land and the houses thereon, Situated in Harpers Ferry Beginning at the premises of Daniel Ames (Wager Lot No. 15 - subdivision 2, site of Buildings No. 11 and 11A) on Shenandoah Street running to the corner of Shenandoah and High Streets and running thence along High Street to the Store Room of Alfred Burton (Site of Building No. 14) and to the alley in front of the premises of Joshua Cavalier (Wager Lot 15-subdivision 4, site of Building No. 15) in the rear and bounded in the rear by the said alley and the premises of Daniel Ames together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging..." 8

Thus from probably 1837, and certainly 1842, the land on which Buildings No. 12 and 12A stand belonged to Mrs. Ann C. Stephenson. It is therefore suggested that Buildings No. 12 and 12A be called the "Stephenson Buildings."

7. October 12, 1857, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book 37, pp.308-9.

8. September 1, 1870, Deed of B. & S., Deed Book 5, pp.269-70.

2. Erection of Buildings No. 12 and 12A, 1803 - 1848.

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,"⁹ dated Feb. 1803 and reproduced as part of the Harpers Ferry Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF 3004, shows buildings standing on the present sites of Buildings No. 12 and 12A (See Appendix III).

A large single building standing on the sites of Wager Lot 15, subdivisions 1, 2, and possibly 3, is delineated on the 1835 map, "Map of Harpers Ferry Shewing 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."¹⁰

In preparation for the public auction of James B. Wager's property in Harpers Ferry in 1836, the newspaper carried the following description of Wager Lot No. 15 before it was broken up into four subdivisions:

"A lot fronting the U.S. Arsenal 90 feet by about 150, binding on a cross street (High Street). On this lot are erected the spacious frame buildings occupied and known as a Hotel for the last 30 years..."¹¹

9. National Archives R.G. 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortification Map File, Part of Map: Dr.150, sheet 1.

10. 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. Map is reproduced in Harpers Ferry Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF-3002, sheet two of three.

11. Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1836, p. 4, col.1.

The above evidence thus indicates that any buildings standing on the present sites of Buildings No. 12 and 12A, in 1836, were probably frame structures. To date no direct evidence has been located to indicate the time that Building No. 12 and also possibly No. 12A were converted into brick buildings. As Buildings No. 11 and No. 12 may have been built as one structure, however, the following evidence on Building No. 11 may therefore also apply to Building No. 12.

Building No. 11 was apparently converted from a frame to a brick structure between 1837 and August 1, 1848¹², as a deed of the latter date describes William Anderson's building as a "brick store house." As noted on page 2 of this report, probably between 1837 and 1848, William Anderson purchased property from Mrs. Stephenson on one side of Building No. 11 and from Philip Coons, who owned property on the other side of Building No. 11. The location of these deeds may date the conversion of both Buildings No. 11 and 12 into brick structure. Anderson's original frontage on Shenandoah Street for "ager Lot 15 - subdivision 2 was 30 feet; while the Architectural Base Map, Drawing No. NM-HF 3055, shows Building No. 11 to now have a frontage of 32 feet on that street. In like manner, Mrs. Stephenson's original frontage on Shenandoah Street was also 30 feet, whereas the Architectural Base Map indicates that Building No. 12 now has a front of 27 feet on that street. It therefore seems likely that Anderson purchased some 2 to 3 feet of Mrs. Stephenson's land and alterations to both Buildings No. 11 and 12 date from that 12. Aug. 1, 1849, Deed of B. & S., Deed Book 30, pp. 306-7.

purchase.

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," (See Appendix IV), by means of a generalized symbol, shows buildings standing at that date on the sites of Buildings No. 12 and 12A.¹³

3. Historical Uses of Buildings No. 12 and 12A, 1827-1856.

From 1803 to 1837, Building No. 12 was used as a hotel and tavern.¹⁴ Newspaper advertisements throw the following light on the uses of Buildings No. 12 and 12A:

1. 1827 Doctor's Office

"Doctor N. Marmion, lately of Charlestown Respectfully offers his professional services to the inhabitants of Harpers Ferry and its vicinity. He may, for the present, be found at Major Stephenson's Hotel." 15

2. 1831-Tavern:

In 1831 J. Stephenson advertised for a "Bar-Keeper." 16

3. 1834 - Harpers Ferry Hotel and Mail Stage Office:

"The subscriber, in company with Mrs. Stephenson, has commenced business in the well-known Tavern Stand, on the corner at Harpers Ferry... Several new room have been lately added (Building No. 12A???) which contributes very much to the comfort of the establishment.

"The MAIL and ACCOMMODATION STAGES run daily to and from the house; and the facilities of travelling, by the Canal and Rail Road, under an excursion from the seaboard to Harpers Ferry, is one of great interest and pleasure. F. Beckham." 17

13. National Archives R.G.77, Dr. 150, sheet 54.

14. 1803 Map; "1811 Flat of Arsenal Lot" labels Building No. 12 as "Tavern", from National Archives R.G. 107, Secretary of War P-259 (5) Enc.; also 1836 Virginia Free Press, April 7, p.4.

15. Virginia Free Press, March 7, 1827, p.3.

16. Ibid., September 8, 1831, p. 4.

17. Ibid., July 24, 1834, p. 3.

4. 1835- Lawyer's Office: In 1835, Jno. J. Brown, Attorney at Law announced:

"His office is in the house at present occupied by Mrs Ann Stephenson - formerly kept as a tavern by Maj. Jas. Stephenson, dec'd - next door east of Mr. R. Levering's store..." 18

5. January 1856: "New Cash Store:" In January 1856 Thomas Peacher announced:

"Tho's Peacher would respectfully inform his friends and the public generally, that he has opened a large and well selected stock of Dry Goods, Groceries, Queensware, Books Shoes, Hats, Caps, &c. in the Store Room known as "Stephenson's Corner" being on the corner of Main and High Streets..." 19

6. April 1856-Store for Rent: In April 1856, Ann C. Stephenson advertised:

"Store House for Rent. The Store Room, on the corner of High and Shenandoah Streets, Harpers Ferry is for rent..." 20

The uses of Buildings No. 12 and 12A from 1856 to 1865 awaits the result of further research in the newspapers of that period.

4. Measured Drawings of Buildings No. 12 and 12A.

No historical drawings of Buildings No. 12 and 12A are presently available.

For modern measured drawings of Buildings No. 12 and 12A, see: Drawing No. NM-HF 3065, 17 sheets, dated August 27, 1956.

Report written by
Dated: October 8, 1957.
Charles W. Snell,
Historian (Park Supervisory)
from primary data collected by
Park Historian Herbert H. Kissling.

18. Virginia Free Press, Dec. 31, 1835, p.1.

19. Ibid., Jan. 24, 1856, p.2.

20. Ibid., April 3, 1856, p.3

APPENDIX I

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE 1835 WAGER PLAN

APPENDIX II

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE DITTMAYER PLAT

(Plat found in Building No. 9)

High st.

sidewalk

ABN

30'

21'
Build
ing 14
21'

Building No. 15

Sub Div ④

5.021

Wager Lot 15

Sub Div ①

Buildings
No. 12 &
12A

William
Anderson
1837-1865

Sub Div ②

Buildings
No. 11 & 11A

Sub Div ③

WALTER E. DITTMAYER

⑭

N 48° N

SIDEWALK

⑬

S 53° E

ORIGINAL WAGER LINE

N

30'

PRESENT BUILDING LINE
SIDEWALK

30'

ORIGINAL WAGER LINE

30'

S 50° W 163.5'

27.5'

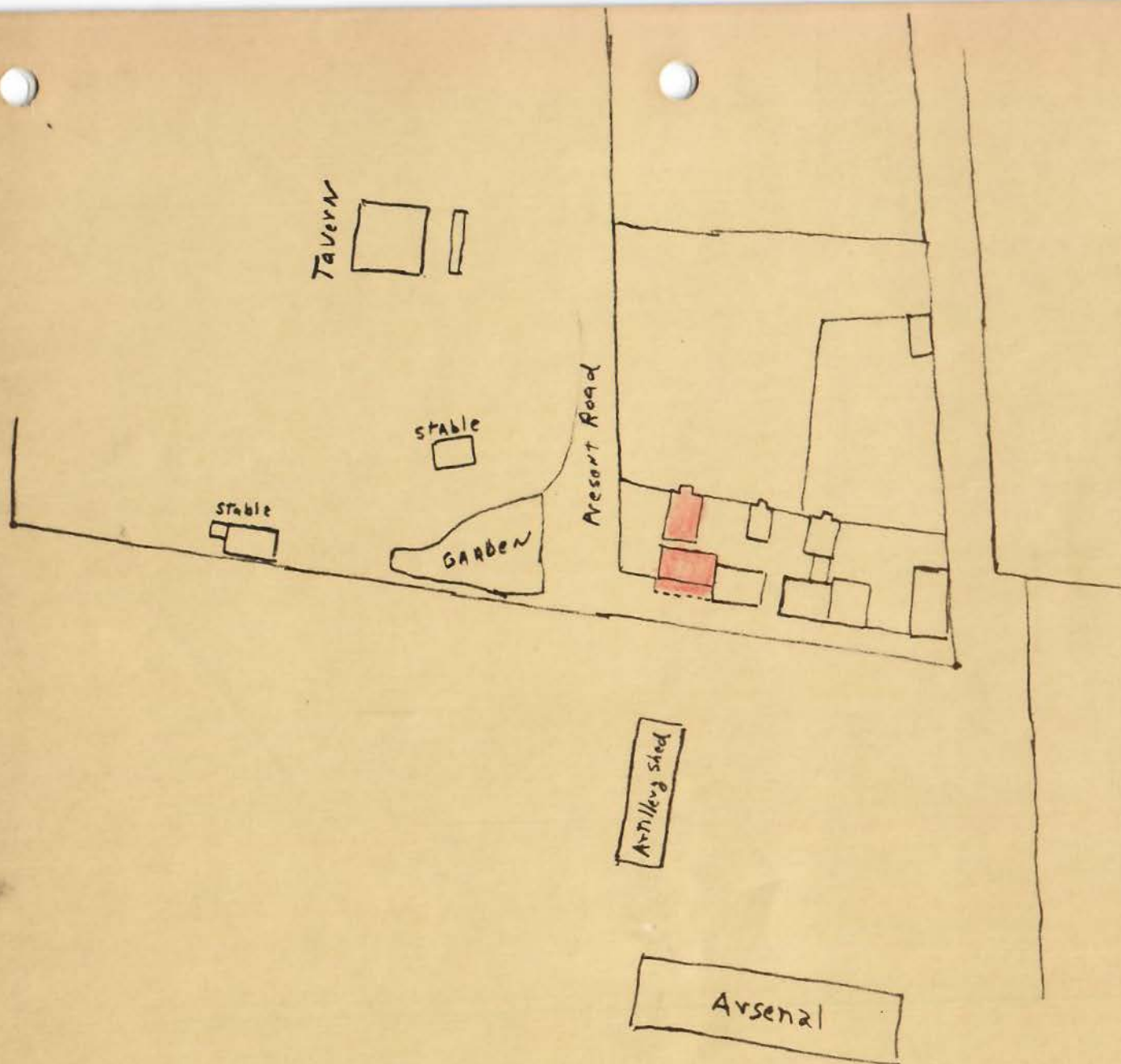
27.5'

18.5'

190 1000

APPENDIX III

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE 1803 MAP

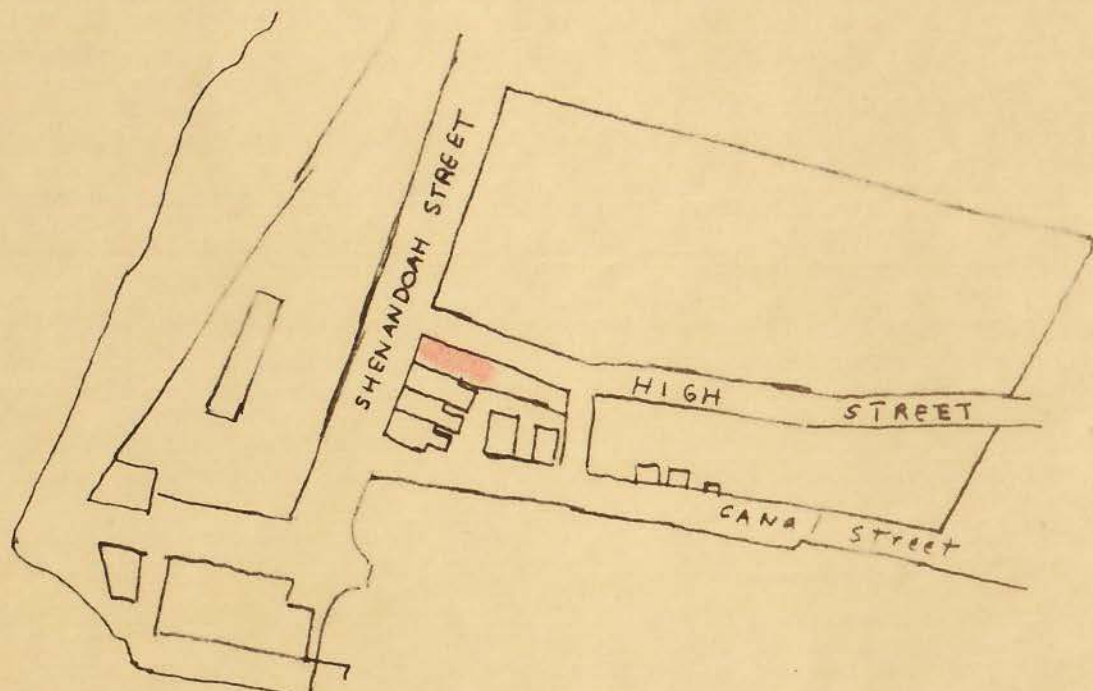


Tracing of a Portion of the 1803 Map
of Harpers Ferry. Scale 4 perches to an Inch.

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

HIGH STREET, HARPERS FERRY ABOUT 1900

Building No. 12, to right, on corner of High and Shenandoah Streets, then 12-A (with porch), Building No. 13 (removed by N.P.S.), white frame structure; No. 14, 15 and 16. Large building on corner to left, was the store erected by William Anderson in 1832 and removed from area before it became a National Monument. Harpers Ferry N.M. Negative No. HF-142.

For a recent view of Buildings No. 12, 12-A and 11, see Historic Building Report, Part I, for Buildings No. 11 and 11-A, page 12.



HIGH STREET, HARPER'S FERRY, W. VA.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Since this report was first submitted on October 7, 1957, further research, conducted generally on all the buildings, has produced the following information on Buildings No. 12 and 12-A: First, a page-by-page search for the deed (see page 2 of this report) covering the sale of land between William Anderson and Mrs. Ann C. Stephenson, in the Deed Books from 1830 to 1865, has failed to locate this document. It is therefore apparent that Anderson, the purchaser, either failed to record the deed, or if he recorded it, the deed was torn out during the Civil War. In any case, no assistance or information from this deed can any longer be expected.

Second, on the death of John Wager, Jr., in 1813, his three children, John, Gerard, and Sally, then minors, were placed under a guardianship. The guardians, of course, accounted to the Court for the expenses and operation of the Wager estate during this period. Information in these records substantiate the data shown on the 1803 and 1811 maps that Buildings No. 12 and probably 11, were used as a hotel during those early years. In 1818, for example, expenses are listed "for building addition to tavern²¹ containing two rooms and porch and materials for same".

Finally, in the building lease granted by the Wager children to William Anderson in 1832, for erecting a structure on Wager Lot No. 51, Anderson's site is located in the lease on "the corner lot immediately opposite to the Harpers Ferry Hotel fronting on Shenandoah Street...and running back...²² with (on the Charles Town Road) (High Street)"

21. Will Book No. 3, p.137, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, West Va.; See also Will Book No. 2, p.287 for 1813-1816; Will Book No. 3, pp.137 & 427, for 1817-1821.

22. Lease, July 6, 1832, Deed Book 18, pp. 1-2.

All this evidence thus substantiates both the early maps and the 1836 newspaper description of Wager Lot No. 15 (see page 4 of this report) as containing "the spacious frame buildings occupied and known as a Hotel for the last 30 years". Architectural investigation indicates that Building No. 12 and 11 were built at the same time as on~~e~~^r building. It would therefore appear that they were constructed about 1800 as frame structures and used until 1835 as a Hotel. In 1835, with the division of Wager Lot No. 15 for puposes of selling off the lot, the large building was partitioned off into two structures, now known as Buildings No. 12 and 11. Some time after Mrs. Stephenson purchased Building No. 12 in 1836 or 1837, the structure was converted into a brick building.

Further Research Required:

A complete and careful search of the newspapers from 1830 to 1861 will give us a complete chain of the uses of Buildings No. 12 and 12-A. The same sources will also probably yield some data on the date of the alteration of these structures. The U. S. Census records, 1830-1860, will also produce background information on the owner of this lot. Correspondence of the U. S. Armory contains information on the early history of Building No. 12 as well as on the career of Mrs. Ann C. Stephenson; this data is now on order from the National Archives.

Historical Significance and Restoration:

Both Buildings No. 12 and 12-A were definitely a part of the 1859-1865 historic scene. As far as is now known, however, the buildings were not closely associated in any way with the John Brown Raid or the events of the Civil War, other than by being a part of the scene in which those historic actions took place. It is therefore recommended that the exteriors of

Buildings No. 12 and 12-A be restored to their 1859 appearance. It is also believed that the exteriors of these structures, in the main, from an architectural point of view, are substantially as they were in 1859. Therefore, only restoration, and not reconstruction, will be required on the exteriors of these buildings.

Monument Use of the Buildings:

It is recommended that the first floor of Building No. 12 be fitted out as a shop of the 1859 period. These exhibits to be viewed by visitors through the windows from the street. In other words, visitors will not actually enter the house, thus reducing the problems of protection. The second floor should be saved for the storage of the exhibits in the event of floods, and I would recommend that all other floors in Building No. 12 be stripped to a shell on the interior. Under this plan all interior restoration work would therefore be strictly limited to the first floor of Building No. 12.

If Storer College is included in the Monument, as now seems likely, with ample ~~am~~ room and facilities for administrative offices on Camp Hill, there will be no need, in my opinion, to place offices on the second and third floors of Building No. 12.

By May 1, 1958, there will be a most pressing need for more office space at this Monument; Building No. 36 is already overcrowded in regards to the space available for office ~~space~~ ^{use}. It is therefore recommended that the first and second floors of Building No. 12-A be utilized in the near future as the Architect's Office and Drafting Room, - to be used for this purpose over the period of the next seven or eight years. The structure

is also located adjacent to the proposed Architectural exhibit that would be situated in Building No. 16. If this plan is followed, then the interior of Building No. 12-A should be rehabilitated for modern office use. Once the building has served this purpose, I would then recommend that the first floor be fitted out as a shop of the 1859 period.

Charles W. Snell

Charles W. Snell,
Historian (Park Supervisory)

February 3, 1958