

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

May 28, 1959

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument
From: Regional Historian
Subject: Research Report, The Methodist Episcopal Church and
The Free Church. Research Project No. HF-22D

This report is acceptable for present purposes, though
the opening section still lacks clarity, in my opinion.

Signed

Frank Barnes
Regional Historian

In duplicate

Copy to: Director/with copy of report

FBarnes/cp

General ✓
Daily
Area



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Harpers Ferry National Monument
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

May 14, 1959

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H2215

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAY 15 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 Report, The Methodist Episcopal Church and
The Free Church. Research Project No. HF-22D

Enclosed please find four copies of the "Research Report,
History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1818-1868, and the Free
Church, 1818-1845," dated October 23, 1958, first revision March 16,
1959, second revision May 14, 1959, 13 pages, as prepared by Park
Historian Philip R. Smith, Jr.

The report has been revised as directed by Regional
Historian Frank Barnes in his memorandum of May 12.

Frank H. Anderson

Frank H. Anderson
Superintendent

In duplicate

Enclosures

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

May 12, 1959

Nally
5/11

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument
From: Regional Historian
Subject: Research Report, The Methodist Episcopal Church and
The Free Church. Research Project No. HF-22D

It is my opinion that the first part of this report should be rewritten. Some of the same vaguenesses are present that were present in the first version of this report. There is nothing in the text (and the title is not enough) on page 1, for instance, to indicate what church is being discussed; and once again, Samuel Annin seems to be writing on behalf of Harpers Ferry Armory rather than a church.

And can't we tell where the big building was that was used temporarily? And couldn't we start with an opening summary re the church concerned and its housing problem, or give some of the background information that appears in footnote 6? On page 2, again (except for the title), we are "in the dark" as to what church is involved and the relationship to the other church. The "thus" that starts line 7 of the text on this page is not apparent to the reader.

~~Signed~~

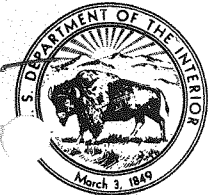
Signed

Frank Barnes
Regional Historian

In duplicate

Attachment

FBarnes/mm
General
Daily
Area



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Harpers Ferry National Monument
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

March 17, 1959

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H2215

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAR 19 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 Report, The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Free Church. Research Project No. HF-22D

Enclosed please find four copies of the "Research Report, History of The Methodist Episcopal Church, 1818-1868, And The Free Church, 1818-1845," dated October 23, 1958, revised March 16, 1959, 13 pages. This report has been prepared by Park Historian Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Frank H. Anderson

Frank H. Anderson
Superintendent

In duplicate

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

HF 282

(Area)

FILE CODE:

RESEARCH REPORT

HISTORY OF

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

1818-1868,

AND THE FREE CHURCH,

1818-1845,

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by:
Philip R. Smith, Jr.
Park Historian
Dated October 23, 1958
Revised March 16, 1959
13 Pages
HF-22D
Second Revision May 14, 1959

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FROM:

TO:

HF-282

RESEARCH REPORT

HISTORY OF

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

1818-1868,

AND THE FREE CHURCH,

1818-1845

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by:

Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Park Historian

Dated October 23, 1958

Revised March 16, 1959

13 Pages

HF-22D

Second Revision May 14, 1959

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page No.

INTRODUCTION

1. Religious Meeting Places at Harpers Ferry,
1796-1825..... 1

SECTION I - METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1. Ownership of the Land, Methodist Episcopal
Church and Free Church, 1818-1868..... 2
2. Construction of the Methodist Episcopal Church 7
3. Historical Prints and Photographs..... 8
4. Historical Plans of the Building..... 8
5. Summary of Historical Data, Methodist Episco-
pal Church..... 10

SECTION II - FREE CHURCH

1. Construction of the Church..... 11
2. Use of the Church..... 11
3. Historical Plans of Building..... 12
4. Prints of Building..... 12
5. Summary of Historical Data, Free Church..... 12

INTRODUCTION

1. RELIGIOUS MEETING PLACES AT HARPERS FERRY, 1796-1825

In the early years of the Armory, buildings for churches were non-existent and the workers had to make use of whatever facilities were available. Religious services were therefore held in the Armory workshops.

On March 15, 1810, Samuel Annin, Paymaster of the Harpers Ferry Armory, wrote on behalf of the community at Harpers Ferry which was composed mostly of Armorers.

"As a society, we labor under great inconvenience in not having a place for public worship, for several years past we have had no other than a part of one of the workshops, which occasions considerable trouble in arranging and removing temporary seats.

If Sir, we could be indulged with a part of the large building (This was an armory workshop located in the Musket Factory yard) which is yet unfinished, until by the increase of hands it is required, it would be a great accomodation. I trust no arguments need be used to show the advantages that would result from having the Gospel preached among us. We only ask permission to occupy about 40 feet, either of the 1st or 2n story." 1

This is the first reference that has been found relating to religious worship at the Armory. On March 24, 1810, the Secretary of War gave Mr. Annin permission to hold services in the building:

"You are permitted until it shall be wanted for public purposes to use as a place of Worship such aprts of the 1st or 2nd story of the large unfinished Building as you desire. To secure this building against the weather, the Doors shall be put up and windows glazed or Boarded." 2

The building that the congregation was permitted to use was described in the October 1, 1810, list of buildings as:

1. Reel 18, V.5, p.497, National Archives R.G., Annin to Secretary of War, March 10, 1810.
2. Reel 18, V.2, p.112, March 24, 1810, Secretary of War to Samuel Annin.

"Building No. 8, Brick, 131 by 45 feet, two stories, and it was used for First story finishing shop and deposit for Musket stocks, Second for Superintendent's Office, store rooms, filing shop and meeting room." 3

This workshop was located in the Musket Factory Yard.

From 1796, when the Armory was established, until 1825, when the construction of the first church was begun, there was no place to conduct religious services. The Armory workshops were therefore used for church meeting rooms. As we shall see, application was made in 1818 for a lot upon which to erect a church, but it was not until 1825 that a church was built.

SECTION I - METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

I 2. OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND FREE CHURCH, 1818-1868

On April 4, 1818 Captain Morton of the Ordnance Office wrote to Superintendent Stubblefield that an application had been made to the Secretary of War for the lease of a Government lot on which to build a church. Captain Morton then stated:

"The ground cannot be granted away, either by the War or this Dept, but the Parties may have permission to build upon the Ground described by them, Messrs Adamson, Beale, Larken, and others subject to any future disposition of the Property that the Public interests may require, but in the occupation of which it is not likely they will be disturbed." 4

Superintendent James Stubblefield replied that he would lay out the plot for the meeting house on a site that would not be wanted for the public use. Thus in April, 1818, two leases for lots on which to erect churches were granted by the United States, one to the Free Church and the other to the Methodist Episcopal Church. Both leases or grants were verbal rather than written agreements. The Free Church was located at H on the 1848 map which appears on the following page; the Methodist Episcopal Church at C on the same map. The lease

4. Reel 14, V.2, p.145, Morton to Stubblefield, April 4, 1818.

5. Reel 21, V.3, p.236, Stubblefield to Bomford, April 8, 1818.

6. Stubblefield to Bomford, Chief of Ordnance, December 30, 1825, Reel 21, V.8, p.846. "It was at first intended to build a church for the use of all denominations (the Free Church), but the Methodists being more numerous than any other society concluded to build one for their own separate use.....A room in one of the workshops had been heretofore (prior to 1825) fitted up and occupied for a meeting room and school room, but this being so nearly connected with the Armory is considered dangerous on account of fire,..."

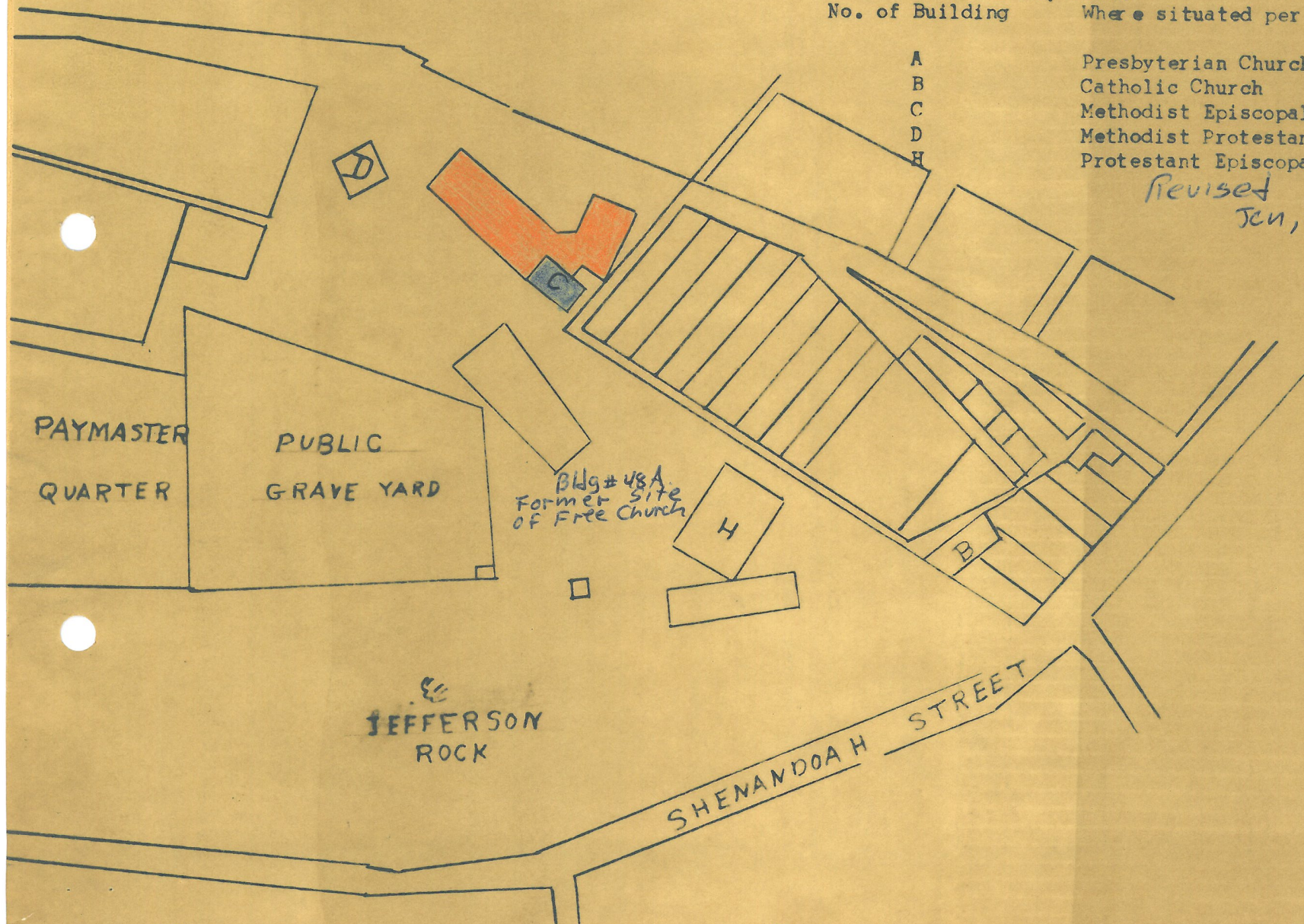
7. Col. George Talcott, Ordnance Department, to Superintendent John Symington, January 4, 1848, Reel 19, V.4, p.322. Talcott to Symington, February 10, 1849, Reel 19, V.4, p.372. Talcott to Secretary of War, February 16, 1849, Reel 20, V.1, p.41.

MAP OF HARPERS FERRY
 Prepared in compliance
 with letter to Major Symington
 April 22, 1848.

No. of Building Where situated per map.

- A Presbyterian Church
- B Catholic Church
- C Methodist Episcopal Church
- D Methodist Protestant Church
- H Protestant Episcopal Church

*Revised By Symington
 Jan, 1851*



of the Free Church expired in 1845 with the destruction by fire of that building and the same lot was next leased by the United States to the Protestant Episcopal Congregation for the purpose of erecting a new building, Bldg. No. 48A.⁹

In the sale of surplus Government land that took place at the Armory in 1852, the lot leased to the Methodist Episcopal Church was set aside for the continued use of the church in accordance with the policy of the Ordnance Department outlined in the following statement by the Secretary of War:

"From this sale will be excepted such lots or portions of ground as are recommended in said report of 24 September, to be reserved. Also such other lots or portions of grounds as are designated on the plat above described (see 1852 map) as the sites of Churches, parsonages, or public institutions of any kind, leaving to the persons or Corporations interested in said reservations to apply to Congress for a title to the Same, which I have no power to grant."¹⁰

On December 15, 1868, Full title to this Methodist Episcopal Church lot¹¹ was granted to the church by the United States under an act of Congress.

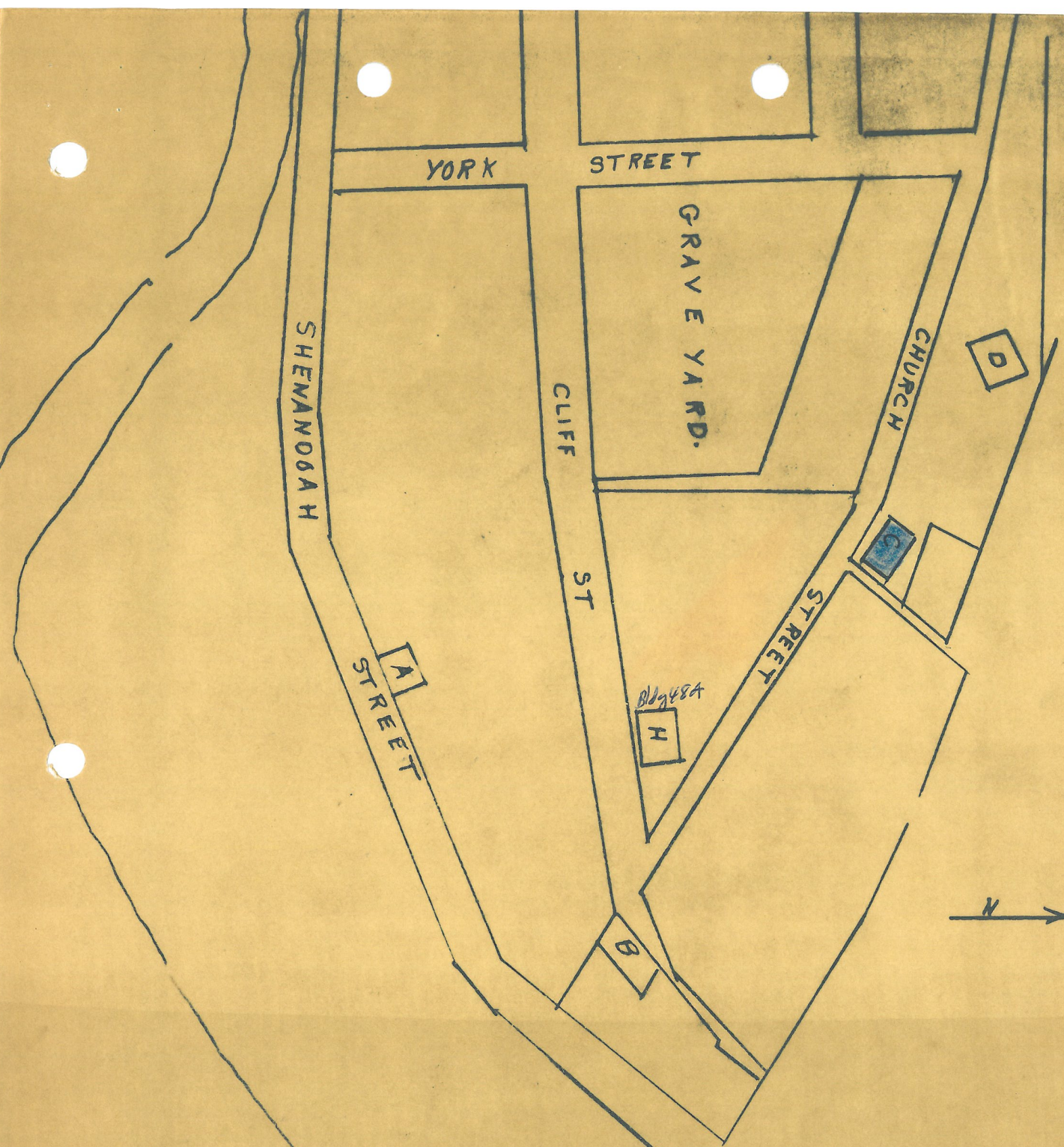
As already noted, the Free Church burned in 1845 and the history of this lot after that date will be found in the history of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bldg. No. 48A.

8. Lease, U.S. to Protestant Episcopal Church, January 16, 1851, Reel 26, V.2, p.192.

9. Ibid.

10. Report of Board of Officers, September 24, 1851, Approved by the Secretary of War, June 10, 1852, Reel 24, V.8, p.802-806.

11. 1869 Map, Catalogue of the Harpers Ferry Armory Property to be sold by the United States on the 30th November, 1869, at the Town of Harpers Ferry, Va.



No of Building

Where situated per map.

A
B
C
D
H

Presbyterian Church
Catholic Church
Methodist Episcopal Church
Methodist Protestant Church
Protestant Episcopal Church

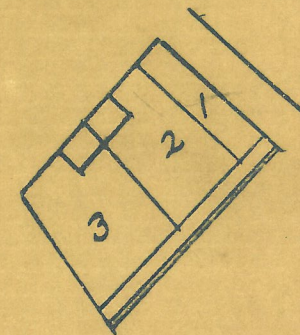
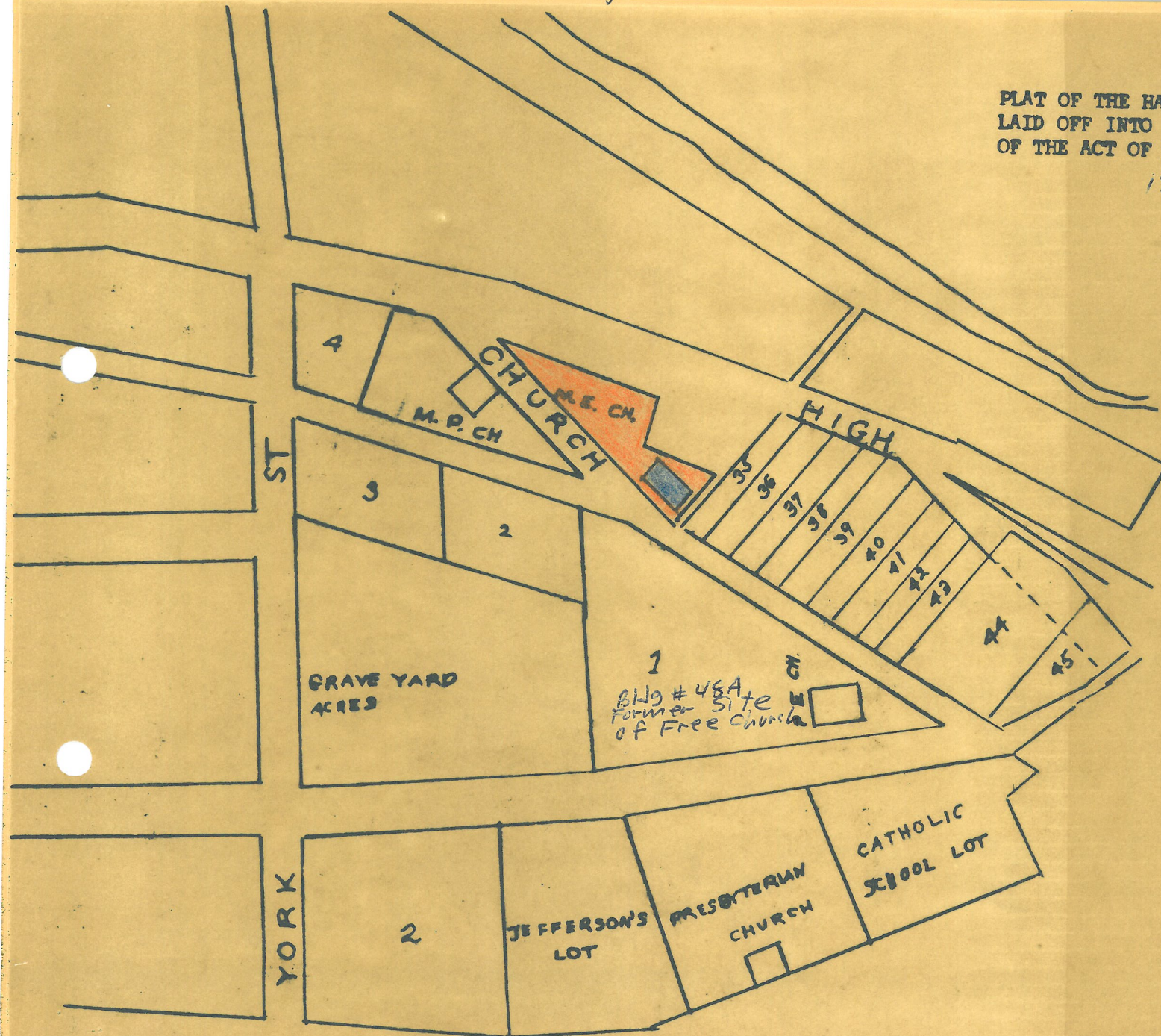
S. Howell Brown's Map
MAP OF HARPERS FERRY, 1852

~~PREPARED IN COMPLIANCE WITH LETTER~~
~~TO MAJOR SPRINGTON, APRIL 22, 1848~~
~~S. HOWELL BROWN~~
~~REVISED BY MAJOR SPRINGTON,~~
~~JANUARY, 1851~~

5-

PLAT OF THE HARPER'S FERRY ARMORY PROPERTY
LAID OFF INTO LOTS FOR SALE IN PURSUANCE
OF THE ACT OF DECEMBER 15TH 1868.

1869 Map



2. CONSTRUCTION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Methodist Episcopal Church was constructed between 1825 and 1828¹ and was built by Mr. Lewis Wernwag, who also constructed the Free Church at about the same time.² The Methodist Episcopal Church was 40 by 60 feet in size.³ Photograph HF-46, a view of the town of Harpers Ferry in 1861, shows the church to be a one and a half story building with a basement, located on Church Street between the Methodist Protestant and St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church.

It had five windows and a door on the front of the building, and what appears to be five windows on the side of the building.

The church was totally destroyed during the war and the congregation⁴ therefore united with the Bolivar Church after 1865.

On April 10, 1835, the Methodist Episcopal Church applied to the Secretary of War for use of one of the Armory dwellings as a parsonage. Permission⁵ was granted on January 19, 1838.

On March 1, 1850, the church again applied for a house,⁶ but because of the lack of dwellings, they were given a lease to vacant Lot No. 3, Block H, Camp Hill and later also the adjoining vacant Lot 4, Block H, Camp Hill, on which to build a parsonage.⁷

1. Reel 21, V.8, p.846, Stubblefield to Bomford, December 30, 1825; Reel 22, V.6, 7, pp.597-602, February 23, 1829, Stubblefield to Bomford; Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1831, p.3, c.2.

2. Reel 14, V.9, p.836, Bomford to Rust, October 29, 1831.

3. Reel 19, V.4, p.372, February 10, 1849, Talcott to Symington.

4. Strange Story of Harpers Ferry, Joseph Barry, p.172.

5. Reel 19, V.14, p.1342, Bomford to Secretary of War Poinsett, January 19, 1838.

6. Reel 24, V.3, p.223, Methodist Episcopal Church to Secretary of War Crawford, March 1, 1850.

7. Reel 27, V.7, p.665-6, 668, November 17, 1859, Lease of U. S. to Methodist Episcopal Church.

3. HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs showing the Methodist Episcopal Church will be found in Smith, Philip R., Jr., "Historic Building Report, Part I, for Bldg. No. 48A, St. John's Episcopal Church," dated October 23, 1958, revised March 6, 1959 on the following pages:

1. 1861, HF-64, page 19.
2. 1861, HF-46, page 20.
3. 1862, HF-240, page 21.
4. 1862, HF-11, page 23.
5. 1865, HF-449, page 24. Methodist Episcopal Church is missing in this photograph.

One engraving, HF-22, will be found on the next page, made in 1839.

4. HISTORICAL PLANS OF THE BUILDING

No plans of the Methodist Episcopal Church have been located.

Harpers Ferry (From the Blue Ridge)
Published in London, 1839. HF-22.

Drawn by W. H. Bartlett, Engraved by
G. Mills.

London, Published for the Proprietors
by George Virtue, 2 Ivy Lane, 1839.

Library of Congress Prints and Photo-
graphs Division.

This photograph is the only one early enough to show the
Free Church. The building on the hill behind the town to the
left of the tree might possibly be the Free Church, site of
Building No. 48-A. The building on the hill to the right of the
tree is possibly the Methodist Episcopal Church.



5 1. SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DATA, METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A. Ownership of the Land

The lot on which the Methodist Episcopal Church was to be erected was owned by the United States Government from 1796 to 1868. From 1818 until 1868 the lot was leased by the United States to the congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1868 full title to the lot was granted to the church by an act of Congress.

B. Construction of the Bldg.

The church was constructed by Lewis Wernwag between 1825 and 1828. This church, with the Free Church, were the first two churches erected in Harpers Ferry. The Methodist Episcopal Church was a one and a half story building with five windows and a door on the front and five windows on the side of the building. It was 40 by 60 feet in size. The church was totally destroyed during the Civil War.

C. Use of the Bldg.

The building was used from 1828 to 1861 for the purposes of religious worship. It was demolished during the Civil War.

SECTION II - FREE CHURCH

1. CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH

The Free Church was given a lease to a lot in 1818 but construction of the building was not started until 1825.¹ The church was near completion in 1827, as Acting Superintendent Rosewell Lee wrote:

"In order to give you a correct idea of the situation of the building so far as I understand it, I would state, that a building has been created being 60 by 40 feet on the ground plan. The first story (12 feet high) is ^{intended} intended for Schools, to be divided into three apartments viz. one for a pri-^{for} mary Lancastrian School, One for the higher branches and one for a female ^{piece} seminary....^{of}

The most part of the house has been built by subscription and all I be-^{Religious} lieve thus far, except one quarters house rent amount to _____ dollars....^{worship}

The upper story is nearly completed by subscription and will be one of the most splendid Masonic Halls in this part of the country...." 2

The Free Church was constructed by Lewis Wernwag, a builder of the com-³ munity, whose saw mills were located on the Island of Virginus. The Free Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church was thus the first two churches to be erected in Harpers Ferry.

2. USE OF THE CHURCH

The church was used from 1825 until 1843 by all of the faiths of Harpers Ferry with the exception of the Methodist Episcopal and the Roman Catholic Churches.⁴

The church was destroyed by fire on January 7, 1845, as noted by the newspaper:

1. Reel 21, V.8, p.846, Stubblefield to Bomford, December 30, 1825.
2. Reel 22, V.1, p.38, Acting Superintendent R. Lee to Col. Bomford, January 3, 1827; Reel 22, V.1, p.40, Lee to Bomford, January 3, 1827.
3. Reel 12, V.11, p.1014, Charles H. Clark, statement; Reel 12, V.11, p.1015, Wernwag to Secretary of War, April 15, 1842; Reel 21, V.8, p.844, Stubblefield to Bomford, December 30, 1825.
4. Reel 21, V.8, p.846, Stubblefield to Bomford, December 30, 1825.

"The large three story building at Harpers Ferry known as the "Free Church," was totally destroyed by fire, on Tuesday, the 7th inst. The lower story of the building was occupied as a Church, the second story as school rooms, and the upper story as a Lodge Room by the Masonic Fraternity. The fire originated in the second story, and is supposed to have been communicated by fire remaining in the stove pipe, which had been burning that evening. The whole of the contents of the building were lost, which is of considerable loss to the Masons. All of the Regalia, and fixtures of the Lodge were totally destroyed. Masonic loss estimated at about \$5,000." 5

3. HISTORICAL PLANS OF BLDG.

No historical plans of the Free Church have been found.

4. PRINTS OF BLDG.

HF-22, the only photograph of this building has been included earlier in the report on page 9.

5. SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DATA, FREE CHURCH

A. Ownership of the Land

The lot on which the Free Church was erected was owned by the United States Government from 1796 to 1868. From 1818 until 1845, when the Free Church burned, the lot was leased by the United States to the congregation of the Free Church.

B. Construction of the Bldg.

The Free Church was erected by Lewis Wernwag in 1825-1827. It was a stone 3 story building with dimensions of 60 by 40 feet and had a wooden shingle roof. The first floor was 12 feet high and was used for the purpose of religious worship.

The second floor was used for a school and was divided by partitions into three compartments. The walls were plastered and it had a door opening into each compartment. One of the compartments was to house the primary Lancasterian School, another the secondary school, and the third to be used for

5. Virginia Free Press, January 16, 1845, p.2, c.6.

the female seminary.

The third floor was built by the Masons and used as a meeting hall for their local chapter.

Funds for construction of the first two floors of the building were raised by popular subscription, while the third and the roof was paid for by the Masons.

C. Use of the Building

The building was used from the 1827 or 1828 period until the building burned in 1845 as a community church serving the needs of all faiths in Harpers Ferry with the exception of the Methodist Episcopal and the Roman Catholic Churches.

The second floor was used as schools. The third floor was used as a lodge room for the local chapter of the Masons.

Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Philip R. Smith, Jr.

Park Historian

March 16, 1959

Second Revision May 14, 1969