

RESEARCH REPORT

HF-415

A COLLEGE IN SECESSIA

THE EARLY YEARS OF

STORER COLLEGE

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Baptist Church Built 1894

Prepared by:

Alfred Mongin
Park Historian

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Research Project HF-104A

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PREFACE

The purpose of this report is to summarize the early years of Storer College. The original purpose of its preparation was submission for publication in the National Parks Courier - The Newspaper of the Stephen Mather Family Association.

For locating and making available the source materials cited, the writer is indebted to the Business Manager of Storer College, Mrs. John Newcomer, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Archie W. Franzen, A.I.A., has been of invaluable aid in identifying names old and new of buildings and plats on and about the college campus. More than any other individual, Architect Franzen recognized the archival value of the fast evaporating store of primary records of Storer College, from which this report utilizes only a small measure of a small part.

Superintendent Frank H. Anderson, Harpers Ferry National Monument, has been catalytic in his encouragement of the search for these materials and the preparation of this first report from them.

INTRODUCTION

The primary theme of Harpers Ferry National Monument is John Brown and the heritage of the abolition movement. The major constructive force in the aftermath of abolition was effected by the institutions organized immediately following the end of the Civil War to teach the newly emancipated negro the basic school skills, equipping him to begin the perplexing¹ road up from slavery.

Storer College was founded with the aid of New England philanthropy and grants from the Freedman's Bureau. At the elementary school of its first two years (1865-1867), before the Storer gift of name and funds, the pupils learned to read and write. Emerging as Storer College in 1867, the succeeding generation was inspired to propogate these fundamental skills through careers in teaching, a vocation followed by most when other employment continued to be substantially non-existent for the educated negro. Then came the expansion of the curriculum to include **theology**, and the industrial and home arts; and, finally, attempts to raise the level of the school to full collegiate status. This last measure was doomed to failure, as the school itself was destined for extinction, by the accomplishment of its original goal: "education without distinction of race or color."²

1. No adequate treatment of this education movement has appeared. The recent volume by Richard Bardolph, The Negro Vanguard, (N.Y., 1959), pp. 3, 75-76, 120-123, 225-228, passim, presents a clear and comprehensive statement of the problems and possibilities for interpretation of negro education following 1865, but is itself concerned primarily with the broader social aspects of progress towards equality of professional opportunity.

2. Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Storer College, Normal Department, located at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. 1869. Libbey & Co., printers -- Enquirer Office: Dover, N.H., 1869, p.11.

THE EARLY YEARS OF STORER COLLEGE

In 1865 Rev. N. C. Brackett, a 29-years-old down-easter from Phillips, Maine, representing the Freedman's Bureau, established in the Lockwood House on Camp Hill, at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, a school attended initially by nineteen poorly clad, ill-kempt, undisciplined children, suddenly out of bondage and needing desperately the basic learning of reading, writing and arithmetic.³

February 27, 1867, the then President of Bates College, at Lewiston, Maine, Dr. Oren B. Cheney, received from John Storer of Sanford, Maine, an offer to donate \$10,000 toward founding a school with might eventually become a college, and stipulating that the school be located in a southern state, that admission would be without distinction of race or color, and that a matching sum be raised by the Free Baptist denomination within ten months.⁴ Major-General O. O. Howard, Commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau, and Dr. George A. Ball, New York City, were most instrumental in raising the matching fund, to which Mr. Storer's estate soon afterwards added another \$1,000 to start a school library.⁵

On July 23, 1867, Rev. Brackett received a formal Commission as Agent of the Freedman's Bureau, by Order of Major-General Howard.⁶

3. Storer College (Catalog), 1938-1939, p.10; "Rev. Nathan Cook Brackett. Born July 28, 1839, at Phillips, Maine--Died July 20, 1910, at Harper's Ferry" (Obituary), Storer Record, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, August 1910, p.1.

4. Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Storer College, Normal Department, located at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. 1869. (Libbey & Co., Printers: Dover, N.H., 1869), pp.11-12. Volumes of this series are cited below as Catalogue.

5. Catalogue, 1938-1939 (1939), p.11; 1870, p.13.

6. The Instrument of Commission is in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. John Newcomer, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Rev. Brackett is the maternal grandfather of Mr. Newcomer.

Then, embracing both the donor and his benefaction, on July 23, 1867,
the Freedman's Bureau School operated by Rev. Brackett at the Lockwood
House on Camp Hill became Storer College.⁷

On October 14th the state of West Virginia granted a college charter,
and on December 3d the U.S. Government conveyed much of the present campus
and four buildings (Lockwood, Brackett and Morrell Houses and old Anthony
Hall) to the infant institution.⁸ One of the earliest institutions of
learning for colored youth in the United States,⁹ Storer College was des-
tined to serve through eighty-eight years (1867-1955) in its sublime
mountain setting above the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers.

The first college catalog was issued in 1869, as a Catalogue of the
Officers and Students of Storer College, Normal Department, located at

7. Catalogue, 1938-1939 (1939), p.11.

8. Catalogue, 1869, p.12; 1938-1939 (1939), p.11. Philip R. Smith, Jr.,
History of Paymaster's Quarters, Camp Hill, ("Lockwood" House, Storer
College), Harpers Ferry, 1848-1867, Harpers Ferry National Monument Re-
search Report Project No. HF-74, dated March 23, 1959, pp.1, 10; Philip
R. Smith, Jr., History of Superintendent's Clerk's Quarters, Camp Hill
(Brackett House, Storer College), Harpers Ferry, 1857-1867, Harpers
Ferry National Monument Research Report Project No. HF-73, dated
March 27, 1959, p.1; Philip R. Smith, Jr., History of Paymaster's Clerk's
Quarters, ("Morrell" House, Storer College), Harpers Ferry, 1857-1867,
Harpers Ferry National Monument Research Report Project No. HF-72,
dated March 26, 1959, p.1; Philip R. Smith, Jr., History of the Commanding
Officer's Quarters, Camp Hill, (Anthony Hall, Storer College), Harpers
Ferry, 1847-1867, Harpers Ferry National Monument Research Report Project
No. HF-71, dated March 19, 1959, pp.1, 8, 11. The materials cited in
these four Harpers Ferry Research Reports are not adequate for the founding
of Storer College, since they account for the properties in detail only
through the Civil War. Rep. Presenden, Maine, and Senator James A. Garfield,
Ohio, steered the necessary legislation through Congress, according to Mrs.
Mary Brackett Robertson. "Tradition and Memories," speech delivered at
Storer College Founders Day Program, February 26, 1937, p.15.

9. Catalogue, 1904-05 (1905), p.6.

Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. 1869.¹⁰ It was printed by Libbey & Co., printers, at Dover, New Hampshire, evidencing the close relationship to the New England supporters of the institution. First President of the Board of Trustees was Rev. James Calder, D.D., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, clergyman, poet, crusader for human betterment, and some-time president of Hillsdale College, Michigan, and Pennsylvania State College, Pennsylvania.¹¹ Rev. Brackett served as Secretary and Treasurer, Member of the Executive Board of the Trustees, and as Principal of the school, continuing as Principal until 1896, and as Treasurer of the college and a Member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees until his death at Harpers Ferry on July 20, 1910.¹²

The initial purpose was to serve as a "Normal School or Academy" to "Best meet the wants of the colored people for whose benefit it is especially designed," stated the 1869 Catalogue, and further that "it is the design that this Institution shall ultimately become a College."¹³ Tuition was \$3.00 per quarter, or \$20.00 for five years, payable in advance; room rent was \$3.00 per quarter and board \$2.00 or \$3.00 per week.¹⁴ Students were to "receive counsel and sympathy, learn what constitutes correct living, and become qualified for the performance of the great work of life."¹⁵

10. Copy examined in the Storer College Library, May, 1960.

11. Catalogue, 1869, pp.3-4; "Hillsdale College," The Morning Star, (Boston, Massachusetts), Vol. LXX, No. 27, July 4, 1895, p.1.

12. Catalogue, 1869, pp.3-4; 1895-97 (1897), p.4; 1911-12 (1911), pp.4-5, 7; Storer Record, Loc. cit., f.n. #3 above.

13. Ibid., p.12.

14. Ibid., p.10.

15. Ibid.

An 1869 matriculant had only to be of good moral character, and have a desire to learn.¹⁶ When in residence students were required to attend all classes and recitations, but could attend intermittently for short or long periods of time depending upon personal responsibilities and finances.¹⁷ In 1887 students still were "admitted on any day of the session, and placed in the classes for which they are found, by examination, to be fitted."¹⁸ By 1889 ability to "read in the Fourth Reader, ability to pass an examination in the simple rules of arithmetic"¹⁹ and a minimum age of thirteen were required for entrance. In 1898 a maximum age limit of thirty was added to the entrance rules.²⁰ Life at the college appears still quite uncluttered when the 1905 matriculant was admonished to bring only "Your Bible. A Tooth-brush. Three towels. Brush and comb. Three table napkins. Bedding, if you do not wish to hire it."²¹ 1908 and 1909 recorded the tightening of standards; a student must attend at least half of each year and the minimum age upon admission was raised to fourteen.²²

The curriculum also reflected growth. In 1872 the First Year course consisted of the Third and Fourth Readers, Spelling, Intermediate Geography, Written Arithmetic, First Lessons in Grammar, Penmanship, Recitations and

16. Catalogue, 1869, p.9.

17. Ibid., p.10; Catalogue, 1887-89 (1889), p.20.

18. Catalogue, 1885-87 (1887), p.25.

19. Catalogue, 1887-89 (1889), pp.19-20.

20. Catalogue, 1897-98 (1898), p.27.

21. Catalogue, 1904-05 (1905), p.40.

22. Catalogue, 1907-08 (1908), p.55; 1908-09 (1909), p.10.

Composition. The Second Year course included the Fourth and Fifth Readers, Spelling, Geography, Written Arithmetic, Common School Grammar and Analysis, History of the United States, Natural Philosophy, Penmanship, Recitations and Compositions. The Third Year course listed Reading and Spelling, Arithmetic, Grammar and Analysis, Algebra, Physiology, Moral Science, Chemistry, Constitution of the United States, Bookkeeping, Original Declamations, and Compositions, and Instruction in the Art of Teaching, with Vocal and Instrumental Music elective. ²³ Added for the first time on September 30, 1872, was the Seminary Course, the first academic department, offering a four-year course in the classics, to include instruction in Latin, Greek, German, ²⁴ French, Algebra, Geometry, Botany, Shakespeare and Astronomy. ²⁵ Twenty-five scholars in all would complete the work in this "Academic Department" by 1896, when it would languish in favor of more "practical" training. ²⁶ This was, however, a determined attempt to raise the level and quality of the programs offered. An Industrial Department, including woodworking, printing, blacksmithing and other manual training, was added in 1886; domestic science study became a required study for all women after 1893; and a separate department of Biblical Literature emerged in 1895.

The forty-five year college presidency of Henry T. McDonald, begun in September, 1899, carried a definite and realistic philosophy for those times. ²⁷

23. Catalogue, 1872, p.13.

24. Ibid., pp.13-14; Catalogue, Sept. 29, 1873-June 2, 1875 (1875), pp.16-17.

25. "Graduates of Academic Department," Catalogue, 1895-97 (1897), p.30.

26. "DeWolf Industrial Department," Catalogue, 1885-87 (1887), p.24; "Industrial Department," Catalogue, 1891-93 (1893), p.17; "Department of Biblical Literature," Catalogue, 1893-95 (1895), pp.24-26.

"No person," announced Henry McDonald's first catalog, "is liberally educated unless he can skillfully use his hands as well as his brain.

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Industrialism is the watchword of the age." A uniform grading and examination system was added before 1900, and completion of assigned readings from Burke, Webster, Longfellow, Irving, George Eliot, Whittier, Wordsworth and Shakespeare became a requisite for receiving the graduation certificate.

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The library, primed by the early additional \$1,000 benefaction from the Storer estate, numbered 3,500 volumes in 1844; 4,000 in 1891; 5,000 in 1893 (15,000 when the college closed its doors in 1955).

Time affected the textbooks also. In 1875, when most emphasis still was upon those whose first need was fundamental literacy, the Primary Department pupils studied from McGuffey's Readers, Hooker's Book of Nature, Mary L. Hall's First Lessons in Geography and Thompson's Rudiments of Arithmetic.³¹ In 1887 the texts by Hooker, Hall and Thompson still were listed; the others had given way to Scribner's Geographical Reader and Harvey's Primary Speller.³²

27. Catalogue, 1898-99 (1899), p.4; 1943-1944 (1944), pp.6, 8; 1945-46 (1945), p.8. In the copy of the 1898-99 (1899) Catalogue consulted appears under the first printed listing of Dr. McDonald's name and rank as a member of the faculty the penciled note, "I began work in fall 1899-H.T.McD." Catalogue, 1898-99 (1899), p.4; copy in custody of Business Manager of Storer College, May, 1960.

28. Catalogue, 1899-00 (1900), p.20.

29. Catalogue, 1898-99 (1899), p.23; 1897-98 (1898), p.30.

30. Catalogue, 1872, p.14; 1882-84 (1884), p.25; 1889-91 (1891), p.21; 1891-93 (1893), p.19.

31. Catalogue, Sept 29, 1873-June 2, 1875 (1875), p.19.

32. Catalogue, 1885-87 (1887), p.25.

Each morning school began at nine o'clock Chapel, attendance compulsory, and ended each afternoon with a fifteen-minute assembly,³³ attendance compulsory. In 1891 irregular class attendance became grounds for dismissal, a penalty made more menacing in 1893 by the³⁴ imposition of ten absences from class as grounds for dismissal. In 1907 the college advertised that it had direct long-distance telephone service, and in 1909 decreed that each lady graduate must sew her own³⁵ graduation gown.

For the accomplishment of the mission of the college more was required than the initial four buildings included in the 1867 federal land grant, thus, in 1867 a section of the Smallwood property was purchased as addition to the land being received through the Freedman's³⁶ Bureau. On these grounds the first major new structure was accomplished in 1870 with the completion of Lincoln Hall, a four story frame dormitory for boys,³⁷ constructed through funds given by the Freedman's Bureau. This first new college building burned to the ground on April 12, 1909, its site to be occupied immediately by the construction³⁸ of Brackett Hall. Next, in 1878, was the Myrtle Hall (now Mosher Hall) dormitory for women, named for a Sabbath School paper, The Myrtle,

33. Catalogue, 1885-87 (1887), p.27.

34. Catalogue, 1889-91 (1891), p.23; 1891-93 (1893), p.21.

35. Catalogue, 1906-07 (1907), p.9; 1908-09 (1909), p.10.

36. Catalogue, 1870, p.13.

37. Catalogue, Sept. 29, 1873-June 2, 1875 (1875), p.20; 1906-07 (1907), p.14.

38. Catalogue, 1908-09 (1909), p.16.

edited by Mrs. Frances Steward Mosher. This was followed by Anthony Memorial Hall, named in memory of the deceased children of Mr. Lewis W. Anthony, of Providence, R.I. ⁴⁰ *Created in 1881 and* Its dedication on Memorial Day 1882 was accompanied by an historical oration on John Brown delivered by Frederick Douglass to an assembly of "Confederates and old Virginians" which included the prosecuting attorney of the John Brown Trial, Andrew Hunter. ⁴¹ *Part B by 58* In 1891 arose the since demolished addition to the Morrell House, the DeWolfe Industrial Building, ⁴² named in honor of Mrs. Mary P. DeWolfe, of Illinois. Completed in 1892 was the Curtis Memorial Church, named in honor of Rev. Silas P. Curtis, of New Hampshire, and in 1903 the Lewis W. Anthony Industrial Building, used since 1929 as the Library Building. ⁴³

In September of 1869 ninety-six students were enrolled. One of these was sufficiently advanced to be rated as the "First Class," seventeen were Second Classmen, fifty-three were Third Classmen, and twenty-five were

39. Catalogue, Sept. 29, 1873-June 2, 1875 (1875), p.20; Oct. 2 1877-May 30, 1879 (1879), p.20; 1906-07 (1907), p.14.

40. Catalogue, October 7, 1879-May 30, 1881 (1881), p.21; 1906-07 (1907), p.14.

41. "Decoration Day at Harper's Ferry," Boston Daily Advertiser, June 1, 1882. "... Hon. Andrew Hunter, of Charlestown, --the District Attorney who prosecuted John Brown and secured his execution, --sat on the platform directly behind Mr. Douglass during the delivery of the entire address and at the close of it shook hands with him, and congratulated him, and invited him to Charlestown (where John Brown was hanged), adding that if Robert E. Lee were living, he would give him his hand also," "Introduction," John Brown, an address by Frederick Douglass, at the Fourteenth Anniversary of Storer College, Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, May 30, 1881. (Dover, N.H.: Morning Star Printing House, 1881); "Presented by the Author to Storer College, the proceeds to go to the endowment of a John Brown Professorship," pp.3-4.

42. Catalogue, 1906-07 (1907), pp.14-15.

43. Ibid., p.15; 1931, p.21.

in the Preparatory Section, learning the fundamentals of reading, spelling,
penmanship, geography, and "Mental Arithmetic."⁴⁴ In 1870 the students
numbered 169; in 1872, 223.⁴⁵ During the years between 1867 and 1900, the
largest student body numbered 273, in 1889.⁴⁶ During the first forty years
of the college the number in the student body averaged 176 men and women.

The normal school division graduated eight men and women in the Class
of 1872, five in the Class of 1873, six in the Class of 1874, and seven in
the Class of 1875.⁴⁷ In addition to these twenty-six, all of whom were
teaching, thirty-six other former Storer students, who had not completed
the normal school course, were teaching. Consequently, the first four full
class-cycles resulted by 1875 in sixty-two teaching alumni.⁴⁸ Many of
those who had not then completed the normal school course returned inter-
mittently either to Storer or to other institutions to continue formal
education. By 1877 one hundred former students were teaching, thirty-
seven of them graduates, and a semi-annual week-long teachers' institute
was inaugurated at the College to aid in the continuing education and
professionalization of the teaching alumni.⁴⁹

The Storer Record began issuing quarterly about 1882.⁵⁰ Old Gold
was selected in 1898 for the College Color, with the unique provision

44. Catalogue, 1869, pp.5-9.

45. Catalogue, 1870, pp.5-9; 1872, p.11.

46. Catalogue, 1887-89 (1889), p.16.

47. Catalogue, Sept. 29, 1873-June 2, 1875 (1875), p.24.

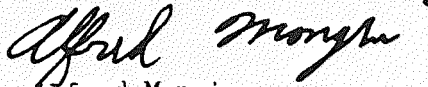
48. Ibid.

49. Catalogue, Sept. 21, 1875-May 31, 1877 (1877), pp.19-20.

50. The earliest issue available for examination at this writing is
Vol. 16, No. 1, Nov. 1898.

that each Class select its own complementary color. In 1915 the College Seal was adopted, and, appropriately, bears the College Motto:

LABOR OMNIA VINCIT.



Alfred Mongin
Park Historian
June 15, 1960

51. Catalogue, 1898-99 (1899), p.23.

52. An original india ink drawing of the Storer College Seal is in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. John Newcomer, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The earliest Catalogue bearing the Seal on its title page is the issue for 1914-1915 (1915). Long prior to the adoption of the Seal Labor omnia vincit was inscribed on the title page of the 1879 Catalogue, and of all subsequent revisions of the Catalogue.