

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

PART I

FOR

BLDG. NO. 48A, ST. JOHN'S

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by:

Philip R. Smith Jr.
Historian

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30 Pages

Project No. HF-22A

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Section I - Administrative Data

A. Name and Number of Building:

Bldg. No. 48-A, St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church.

B. Proposed Use of Structure and Grounds:

We are heartily in accord with Historian Philip R. Smith Jr's.
recommendation that the ruin of the Protestant Episcopal be stabilized
only since it is one of the most attractive features of the area to
many visitors.

C. Provisions for Operating the Church:

No funds have been programmed for the stabilization of this
picturesque ruin.

D. Preliminary Estimate of Cost of Stabilizing the Structure:

\$1,000 The preliminary estimate of the cost of stabilizing this
structure is \$1,000.

CHAPTER I

1. OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, 1796-1868

The lot on which St. John's Episcopal Church was built was part of the property purchased on June 15, 1796, by the United States from John Wager, Sr., for the purpose of establishing a Federal Armory at Harpers Ferry.¹ It had originally been the site of the so-called Free Church, built in 1825, and used until it burned down in January, 1845.² This had been the first grant of land for church purposes by the Armory.³

The Episcopal Church had first requested in February, 1849, use of a lot on the main road leading from the lower part of the town and midway between the lower town and Camp Hill so as to be convenient for members of the congregation living in the upper and lower town.⁴ The proposed site is shown on the map on the following page. The congregation finally decided in January, 1851, on the lot formerly occupied by the Free Church.⁵ Up to that time, the congregation had been meeting in the Superintendent's Old Office, which was located on Lot 1, Block A, Shenandoah Street.⁶

By terms of the lease on January 16, 1851, between the Secretary of War and the church trustees, the lots for the church and a parsonage

¹ Deed, June 15, 1796, Wager to U.S., National Archives, Reel 21, V. 7, p. 704-708.

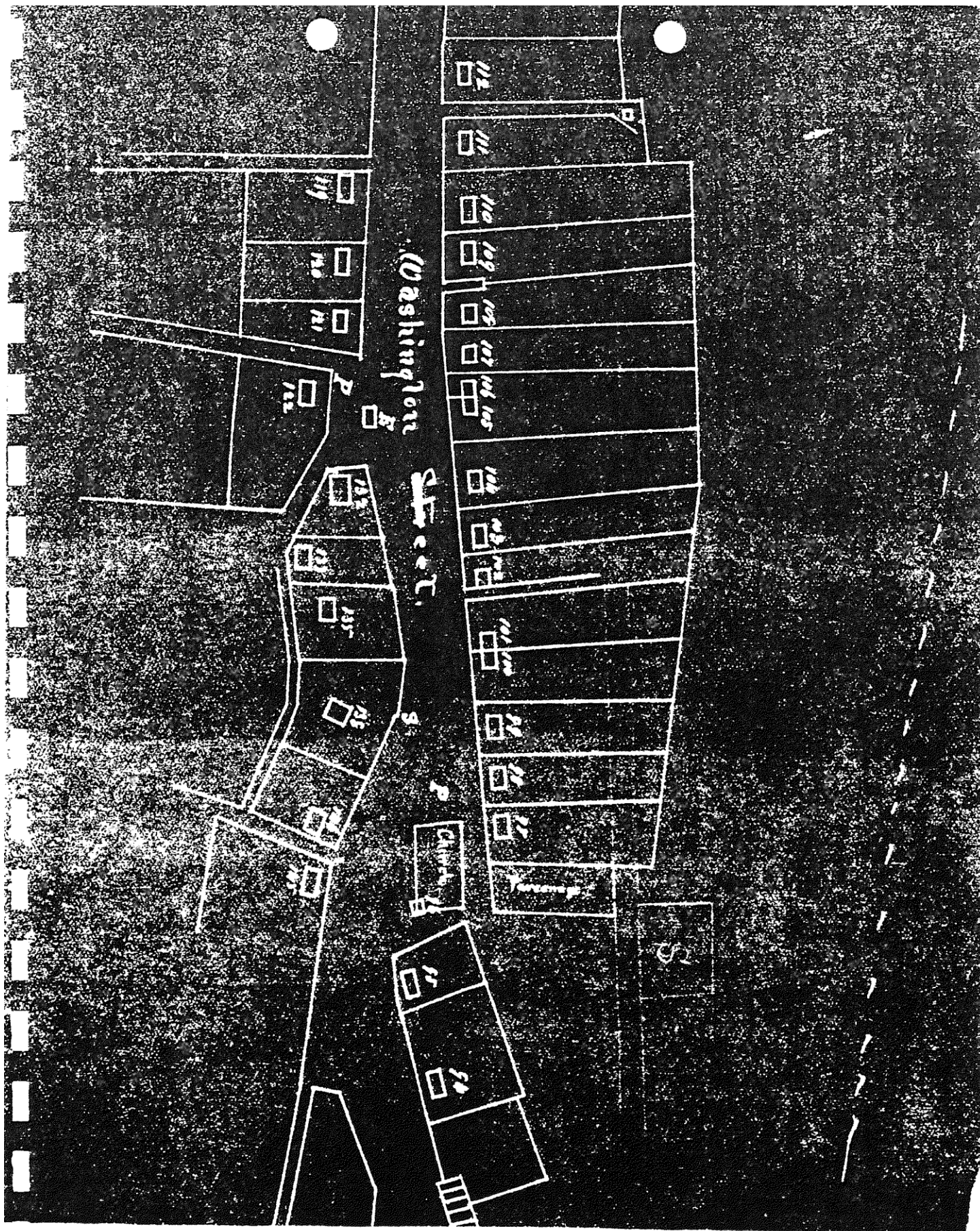
² Virginia Free Press, January 16, 1845, p. 2, c. 6.

³ Major Symington, Superintendent of the Armory, to Col. Talcott, Ordnance Office, February 15, 1849, Reel 26, V. 2, p. 199.

⁴ Application of Protestant Episcopal Congregation to Secretary of War William Marcy, February 5, 1849, Reel 23, V. 12, p. 114-115; Major Symington to Col. Talcott, February 7, 1849, Reel 23, V. 12, p. 1112-1113.

⁵ Major Symington to Col. Talcott, January 10, 1851, Reel 26, V. 3, p. 202.

⁶ Application of Protestant Episcopal Congregation to Secretary of War William L. Marcy, February 5, 1849, Reel 23, V. 12, p. 114-115.



were to be used, "At the will and sufferance of the United States, who specifically reserved the right to reenter and have the same again, as if no such grant..had been made."⁷ The terms were in keeping with the understanding reached at the time of the agreement with the Free Church in 1825 which was to be used as a model for similar agreements made with churches in following years.⁸ According to a letter from Superintendent Lee to the Ordnance Office dated March 28, 1827, the individuals who assisted in the erection of that church did not "expect or claim any vested rights, control, or proprietorship on the building, they consider it as belonging to the government wholly with the understanding that it is to be and will continue to be appropriated for the use of public worship and of Schools for the citizens of this place..."⁹

At the time of the surplus land sale in 1852, the lot used by the Episcopal Church was set aside for that use in accordance with the policy outlined in the following statement by the Secretary of War:

"From this sale will be expected 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 as the sites of Churches, parsonages, or public institutions of any kind, leaving to the persons or corporations interested in said reservation to apply to Congress for a title to the Same, which I have not power to grant."¹⁰

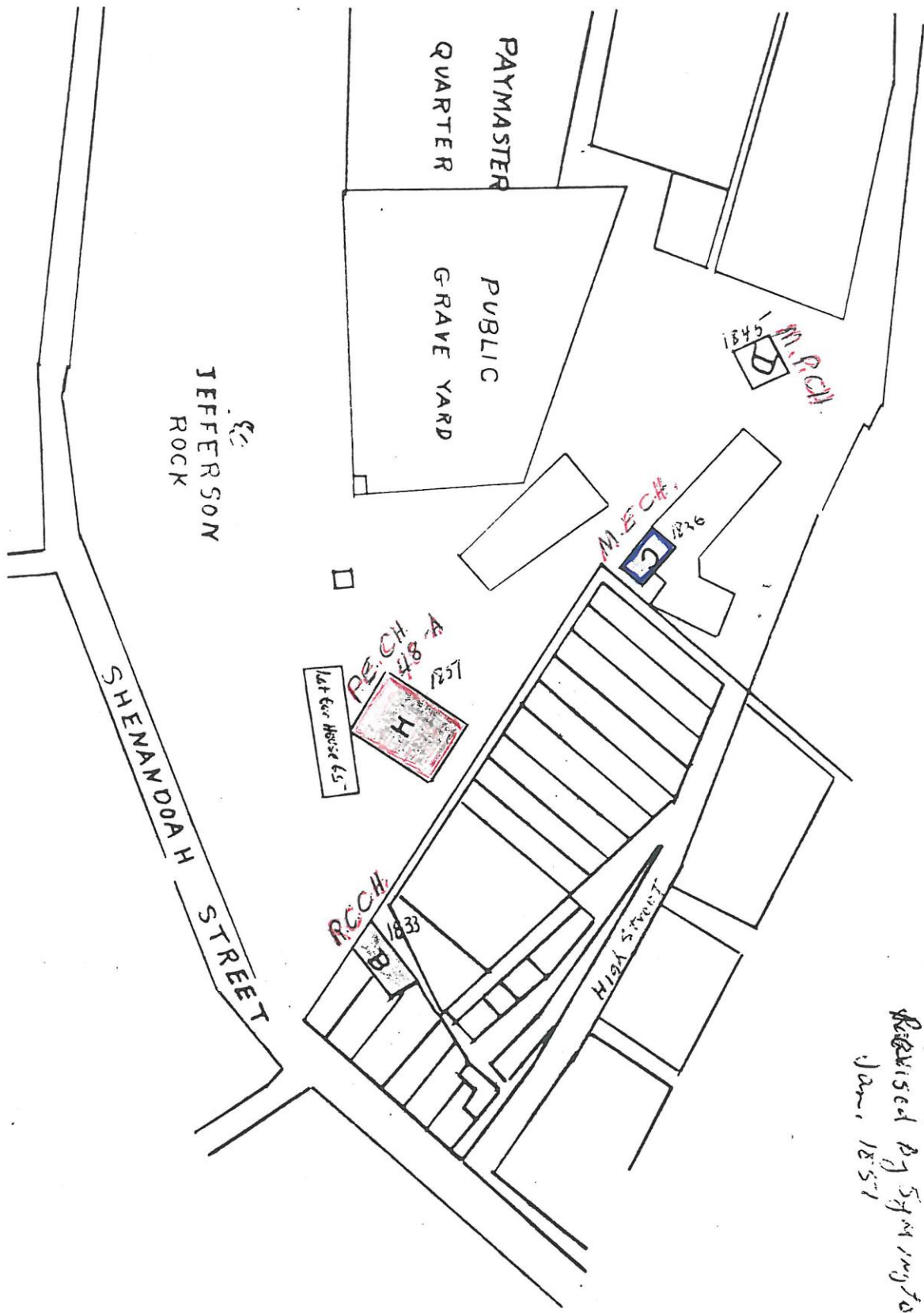
The final location of the lot for the church may be seen on the 1848

⁷ Lease for the Protestant Episcopal Church, January 16, 1851, Reel 26, V. 2, p. 192.

⁸ See Smith, Philip R., Jr., "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1818-1868 and the Free Church, 1818-1845," dated October 23, 1958, revised March 16, 1959.

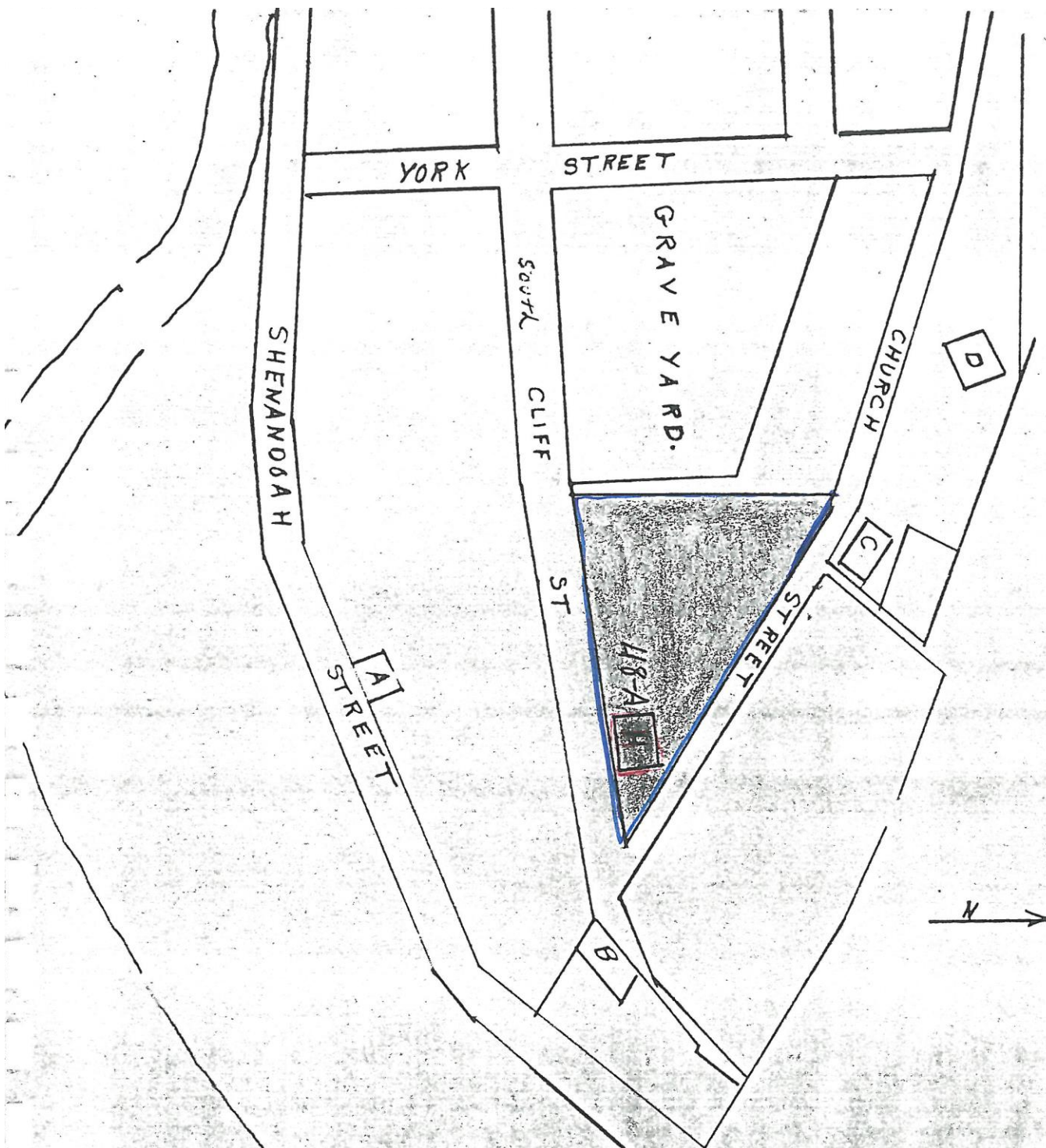
⁹ Major Symington to Col. Talcott, February 15, 1849, Reel 26, V. 2, p. 199.

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



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

Revised by Symington
 Jan. 1851



Red Area Represents
Lot Granted to P.E. Church in 1852

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

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

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-48A



Blue and Red area =
Lot granted to Church in 1868

PLAT OF THE HARPER'S PERRY ABBOT PROPERTY
LAID OFF INTO LOTS FOR SALE IN PURSUANCE
OF THE ACT OF DECEMBER 15TH 1866.

1869 Map

and 1852 maps on pages 4 and 5 of this report. On December 15, 1868, title to this lot was granted to the church by an Act of Congress.¹¹ The final size of the lot granted to the church by Congress to the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1868 will be found on the 1869 map on page 6.

2. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 1851-1852

The ladies of the Protestant Episcopal Congregation held a church fair in the week of December 20, 1849, to raise funds for the construction of the church.¹² A careful check of the National Archives material and the Virginia Free Press, 1850-1855, fails to reveal any data on the construction of the building. The church, however, was probably constructed in 1851 or 1852, after the grant of the lease by the government for this purpose in January, 1851. In December, 1851, the ladies held another festival for the benefit of the church.¹³

The church was approximately 37 by 60 feet in size, and was 17 feet high to the eaves, with wood shingle roof.¹⁴ 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.

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.

¹² Virginia Free Press, December 20, 1849, p. 3, c. 3.

¹³ Virginia Free Press, December 25, 1851, p. 2, c. 1.

¹⁴ Perris-Sanborn Map Company, Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia, November, 1894; see page 9.

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 sidewall of the building, with four smaller ones in the basement. A flight of steps led up to the front door through a one story porch from Church Street; evidences of the entrance remain today.¹⁵

In 1907 heat was provided by stoves and there were oil lamps to provide light.¹⁶

This may be seen by glancing at the 1894 and 1907 maps which appear on the next two pages of this report.

The building was damaged during the Civil War, but was repaired and put in good condition between 1875 and 1880 (see Photograph HF-379). Its present state of ruin thus stems from a neglect of the structure that occurred after 1907, rather than from any destruction during the Civil War.

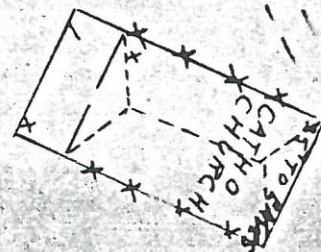
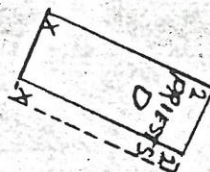
3. USE OF THE BUILDING, NO. 48A

Bldg. No. 48A was used as a church from the time of its construction until it was given up by its congregation at some date after 1907. According to Joseph Barry in the Strange Story of Harpers Ferry, this church along with the five other churches in the town was damaged and desecrated during the Civil War.¹⁷ It was probably used as a hospital or barracks in the 1861-65 period. The church was therefore not used by its congregation during the Civil War, but was repaired after the

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Sanborn Map Company, Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia, September, 1907, See page 10.

¹⁷ The Strange Story of Harpers Ferry, Joseph Barry, Thompson Bros., Martinsburg, W. Va., 1903, p. 172.



CHURCH ST.



diEE

SHENANDOAH STREET

SANBORN-PERRIS MAP CO.
HARPERS FERRY
NOVEMBER, 1894

-R-



48-A

CHURCH ST



FACE OF STONE PRECIPICE

SHENANDOAH STREET

SANBORN MAP COMPANY
HARPE'S FERRY, W. VIRGINIA
SEPTEMBER, 1907

war and continued in use as a church from about 1875 or 1880, as is evidenced by photographs and maps, until at least 1907.

4. HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

All historical prints and photographs, 14 in number, and one modern photograph of Bldg. No. 48A will be found in Appendix I of this report.

5. HISTORICAL PLANS OF BLDG. NO. 48A

No historical plans of Bldg. No. 48A have been found and it is unlikely that any will ever be found. Modern measured drawings of this structure have not yet been 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 1819 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.

Title to the lot as laid out on the 1869 map, was granted to the protestant Episcopal Church by an act of Congress on December 15, 1868.

B. Constructing the Building

The Protestant Episcopal Church was probably constructed in 1851 or 1852 just after a lease was granted for the lot.

The church was a one story building with basement and was constructed of field stone with concrete facing. Its dimensions were approximately 37½ 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 smaller ones in the basement. A flight of steps led up to the front door through a one story porch from Church Street.

C. Use of the Building

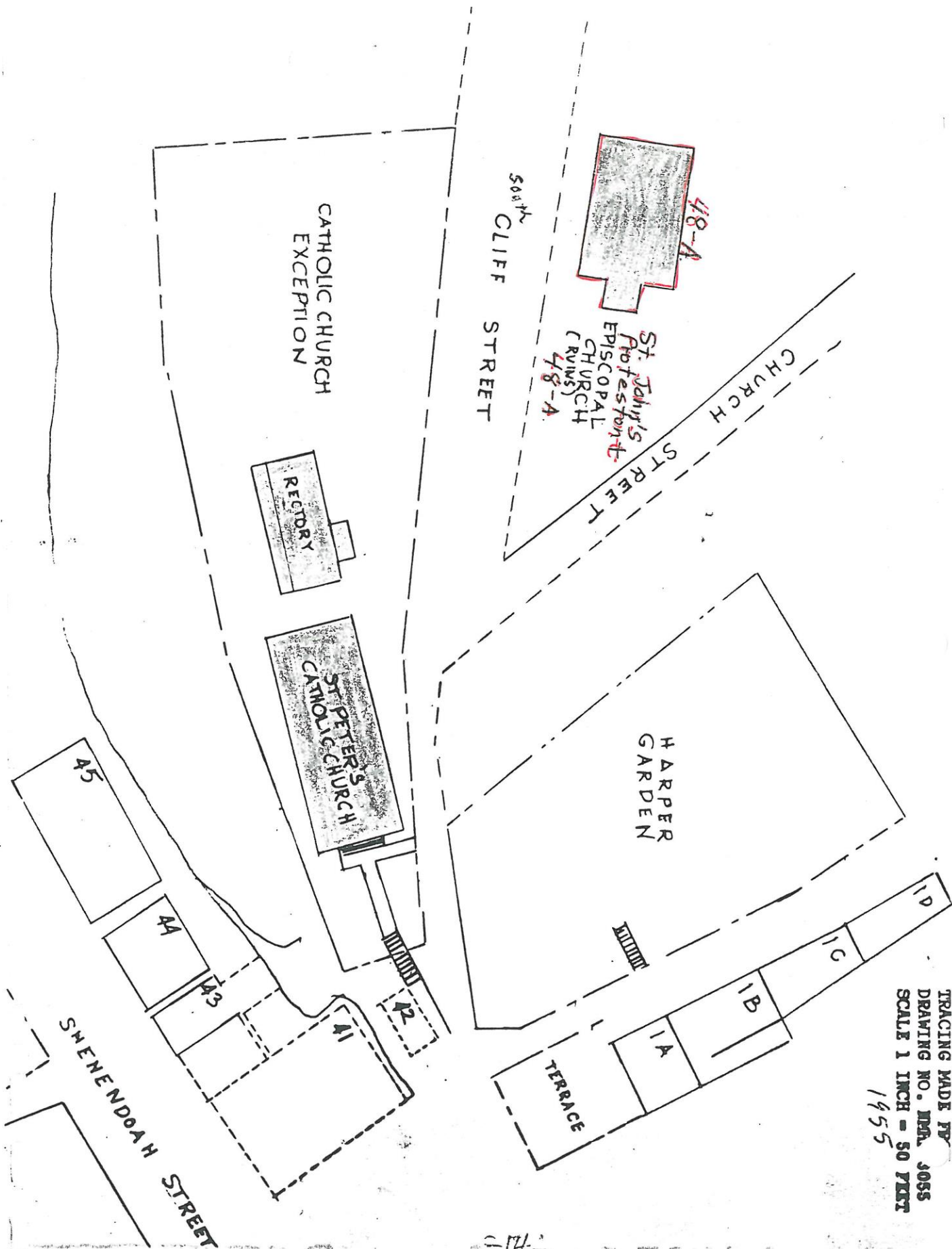
The building was used from 1850 or 1851 when the church was built until 1907 or thereafter for a church for the Protestant Episcopal Congregation of Harpers Ferry. It was damaged during the Civil War and was probably used by troops as a hospital and barracks.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The exterior of Bldg. No. 48-A could probably be restored to its 1859-65 appearance on the basis of evidence contained in the photographs in Appendix I of this report. Such restoration, however, is not recommended. The church is today a picturesque ruin, with trees growing inside it and vines covering both the interior and exterior walls. In its hillside setting, the building holds a certain charm for the visitor which would certainly be lost if it was to be restored. An additional argument against the restoration of Bldg. No. 48-A is that if the Protestant Episcopal Church is restored, then persons interested in the complete restoration of the ruins of the

Presbyterian Church, which is also located in the Monument, would certainly have a right to request a similar treatment of that structure at the expense of the government. It is estimated that the cost of stabilizing Bldg. No. 48-A will amount to about \$1,000. All things considered, it is therefore recommended that Bldg. No. 48-A be stabilized. A 1955 map showing the present location of the Protestant Episcopal Church appears on the following page.

Philip R. Smith, Jr.
Historian
October 23, 1958
Revised March 6, 1959
Revised May 6, 1959



APPENDIX I

PHOTOGRAPHS

(15)

Harpers Ferry and Wooden Covered Bridge From the Maryland
Shore. Before June 14, 1861

Original contributed by John Perry.
National Geographic File No. 140319-A.
HF-64

This photograph was taken before the bridge was destroyed and shows three of the churches that this report is concerned with.

Just over the Harpers Ferry end of the covered bridge is St. Peter's Catholic Church; to the right of it up on the hill is Bldg. No. 65 and next to it the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bldg. No. 48-A. On the same level with the latter two buildings and on the right of the photograph is the Methodist Episcopal Church.



Harpers Ferry from the Base of Maryland Heights

From the Gettysburg N.M.P.
HF-46.

This photograph was made after June 14, 1861, when the Shenandoah Bridge was destroyed and before February 7, 1862, when the Ferry Lot buildings were destroyed.

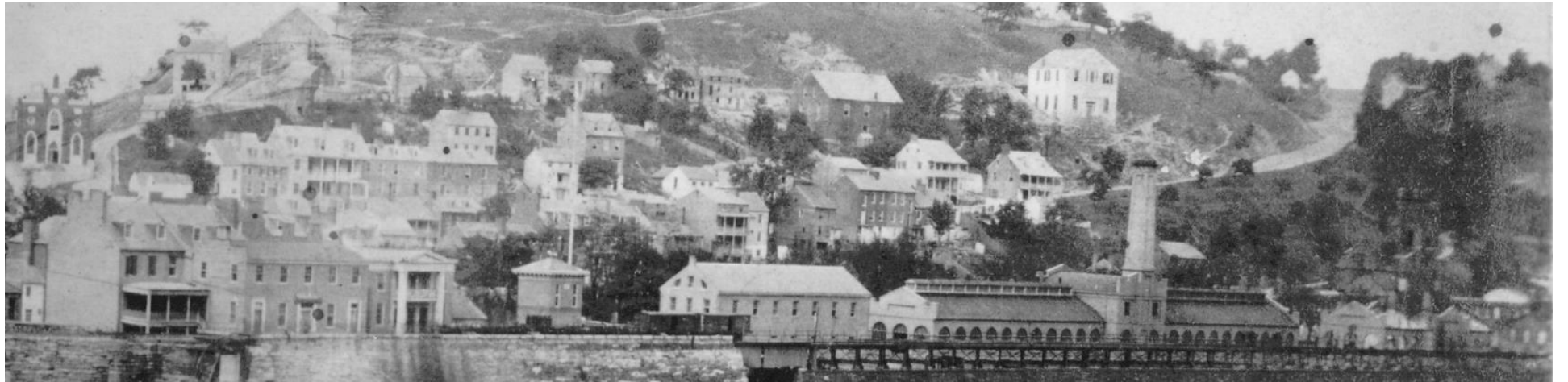
This photograph shows all the churches that this report is concerned with. The building on the hill behind the town in the left center of the picture is St. Peter's Catholic Church. To the right of it and up the hill are Building No. 65 and the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. The two large buildings on the hill toward the right of the photograph are the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant. The Methodist Episcopal is the large building to the left of the armory smoke stack which the Methodist Protestant is just above and to the left of the stack. The two latter churches are missing in the photographs taken after the war.



Harpers Ferry, Photographed immediately After the
Evacuation of the Rebels.

Photographed by C. O. Bostwick.
Reproduced from the Library of Congress, (13344-36).
HF-240. Blow-up from HF-90

This photograph, taken in 1861, shows the churches with which this report is concerned. St. Peter's Catholic Church is shown on the extreme left on the hill in back of the town. Up the hill and to the right of the Catholic Church is Building No. 65 and to the right of it, across the street, is Building No. 48-A, the Protestant Episcopal Church. On the same level and to the right upon the hill are the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestant Churches. In HF-449, taken after 1865, all the churches remain with the exception of the Methodist Episcopalian Church that was so badly damaged it was torn down.



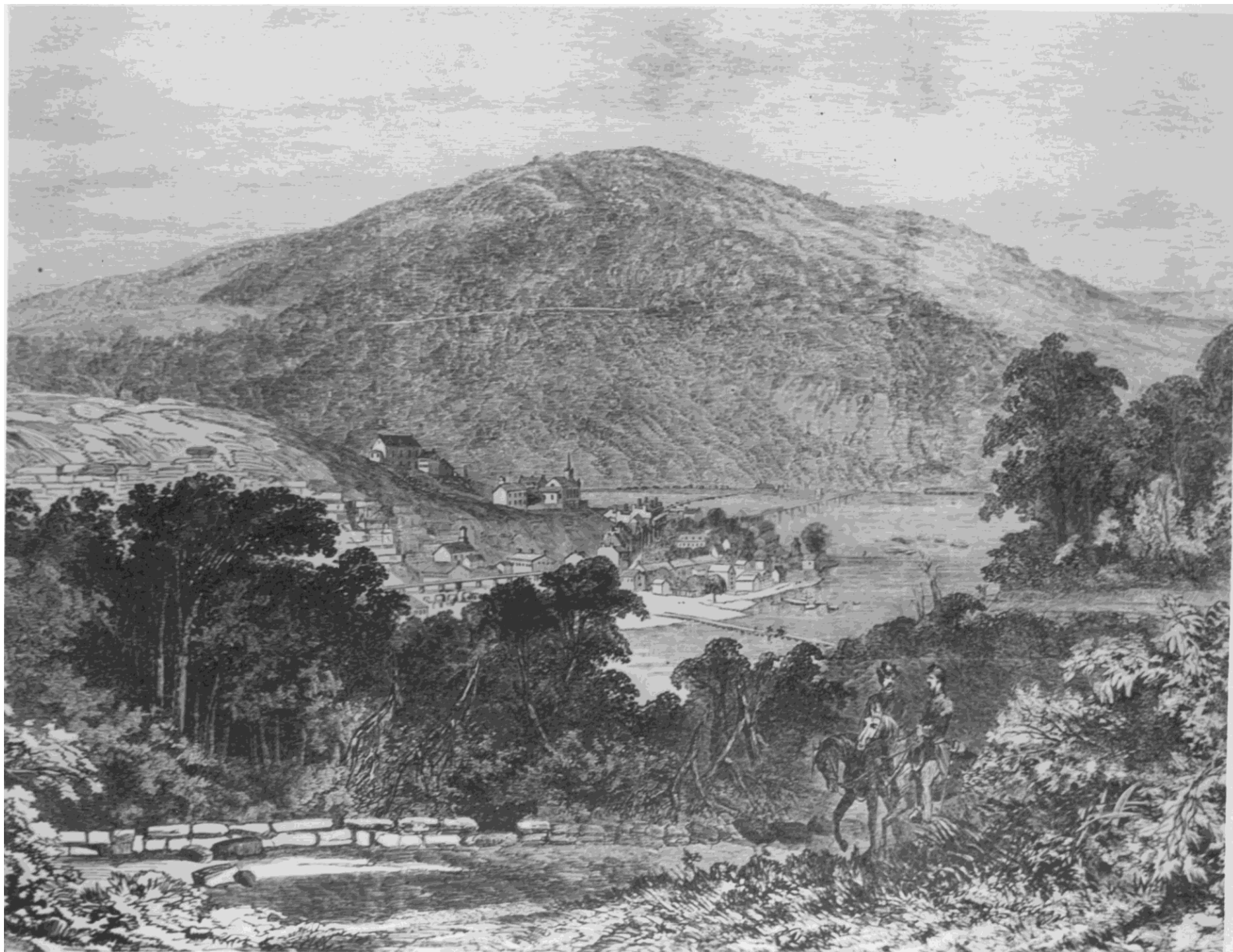
View of Harpers Ferry, the Junction of the Potomac and
Shenandoah Rivers from Loudoun Heights ca. 1861-1865.

From Frank Leslie's Illustrated History of the Civil War,
New York, 1895, p. 373. Wood Engraving HF-6, National
Archives BA-2164.

This engraving was made in the period of 1861 to 1865. This view shows two of the churches mentioned in this report. The Catholic Church is shown in the center of the photograph with the parochial school shown in the rear of the church.

To the left of the church in the engraving and further up the hill is the Protestant Episcopal Church. This is the only illustration showing the addition on the rear of the church containing the chancel.

In the foreground of the town is a church that will be dealt with in a later report, the Presbyterian.



View from the North bank of the Potomac looking across
the river at Harpers Ferry, Ruined bridge in the
foreground. 1862.

National Archives Still Picture Section,
Order No. CN-5079
HF-11

This view was taken after 1862 since the Ferry Lot buildings are missing.

This is a good view of all the churches that this report is concerned with.

To the left of the photograph, just over the wreckage of the bridge, may be seen St. Peter's Catholic Church. To the right of the church and up the hill may be seen Building No. 65. To the right of Building No. 65 is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. It appears that the church has suffered some damage since the windows appear windowless.

To the left of the booms on the bridge appears the Methodist Episcopal Church that was later destroyed and removed. The large building to the right of the booms located on the hill is the Methodist Protestant Church.

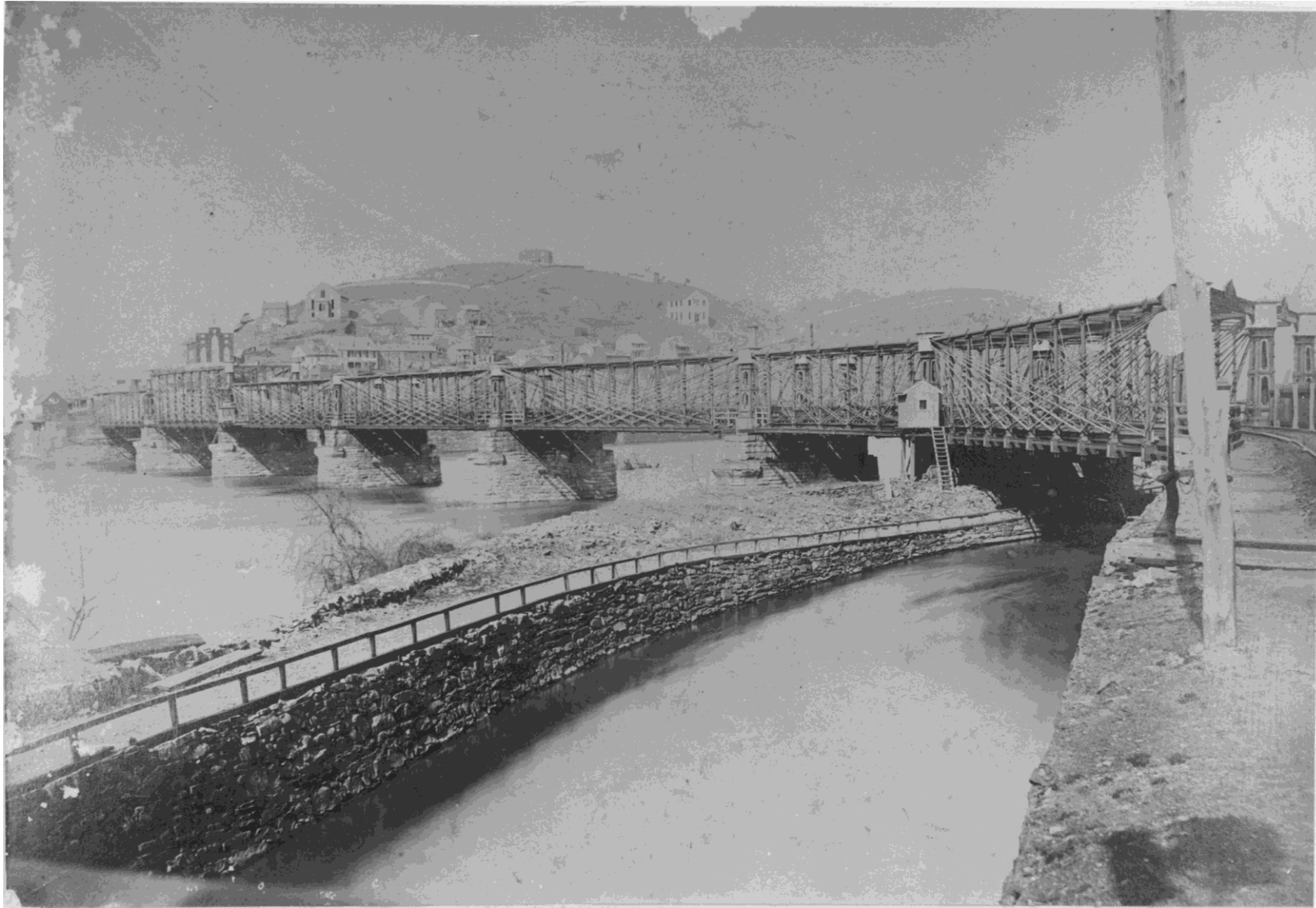
All of the church buildings with the exception of the Catholic Church appear to be windowless and not in use.



HF-449

HF-449 was taken in 1865 just after the war when the new Baltimore and Ohio bridge was constructed.

This photograph shows all the churches with which this report is concerned with the exception of the Methodist Episcopal Church which was removed during the war. St. Peter's Catholic Church is at the left over the railroad bridge, and appears to be undamaged. Up the hill to the right of the church is building No. 65 and next to that is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bldg. 48-A, that appears to have been damaged during the war since the windows are missing together with the stairs leading to the door in front. The Methodist Episcopal Church is missing and on the far right on the hill the Methodist Protestant appears to have been damaged from its occupation by Union troops and battles that raged around the town.



John Brown's Fort, Harpers Ferry, HF-55

Photo made between 1865 and 1870 because the Wager House porch is walled up to the second floor. The engine house is in the foreground of the picture. Above it and to the left of it may be seen the Catholic Church before it was remodeled. Just behind the Catholic Church may be seen the parochial school. In the upper right hand of the picture may be seen the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. To the left of the building may be seen the roof of Building No. 65.



John Brown's Fort,
Harpers Ferry.

Potomac River (Maryland and Loudon Heights) from Harpers
Ferry Hill.
1865-1870

Library of Congress No. 133, Lot 4164.
From Gettysburg N.M.P. Oct. 17, 1957.
HF-25

This photograph shows the roof of the Protestant Episcopal Church,
Building No. 48-A in the right foreground. Building is not yet
repaired.

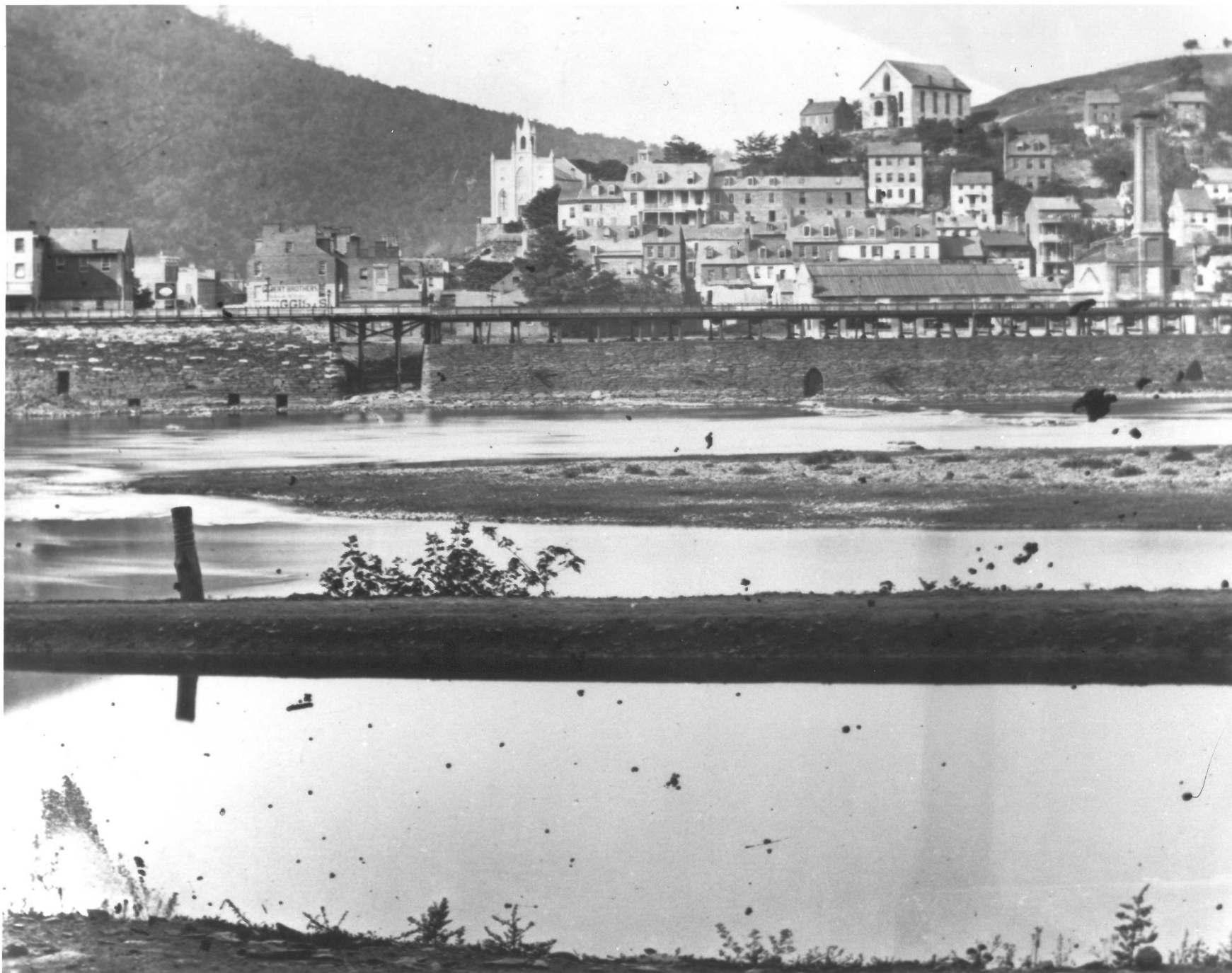


View of Harpers Ferry from the foot of Maryland Heights
Looking directly at the town. Between 1870 and 1876.

From Gettysburg N.M.P.
HF-43

The St. Peter's Catholic Church is shown in left center of the photograph before its restoration. To the left of the church and behind the Wager House may be seen the cupola of the Catholic parochial school.

Up the hill and to the right of the St. Peter's Catholic Church may be seen Building No. 65 and to the right of that the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bldg. 48-A. The steps on the front of the Protestant Episcopal Church have not yet been erected; also the belfry on the front of the building has not yet been constructed.



John Brown's Fort. 1880-1892

HF-379

In 1880's before the reconstruction of the St. Peter's Catholic Church.

To the left and over the Fort is the St. Peter's Catholic Church, as yet unrestored. Just visible behind it is the cupola of the parochial school. In the upper right hand corner of the photograph is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bldg. 48-A, with glass in the windows again.



Harpers Ferry from Loudon Heights -- 1892-1896

National Geographic, 140321-A
HF-99

This view shows the town between 1892, when the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tracks were moved and before 1896 because the Catholic Church has not yet been remodeled.

The Catholic Church is the brick building in the center of the photograph with the five arched windows and the steeple. Behind it and to the left of it in the photograph is the former parochial school, by 1892 a dwelling for the priest.

Just above the school in the photograph and up the hill is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. It appears to be in operation; this refutes the claims that the building was destroyed during the war. The stairs on the front of the building and the windows have been repaired. A belfry has been added to the top of the building.

The foundations of Building No. 65 may be seen just below and to the left of the Protestant Church.

It may be noted that the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal Churches have been removed. The building directly behind the steeple of the Catholic Church on the corner of High and Church Streets is erected on the site of the Methodist Protestant Church.



Harpers Ferry from Maryland Heights.

This photograph was taken prior to 1896 because the St. Peter's Catholic church has not been remodeled and after 1892, as the fort is gone.

HF-95

This photograph was donated through the courtesy of Mrs. J. A. Greenland.

St. Peter's Catholic Church is located a little to the left of the center in the picture. It is the building with three arched windows and belfry on the top. This was just prior to the complete remodeling of the building.

To the right of the Catholic Church and up the hill is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. Note the steps in front of the building and the belfry on top. The windows appear to have been put in, and from all indications the building is in use.



The Picturesque Passage Through the Blue Ridge of the
United Potomac and Shenandoah.

HF-486

Taken after 1896 when the St. Peter's Catholic Church was remodeled and possibly before 1910.

In the foreground of the photograph is the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 48-A. In the lower portion of the building may be seen the outline on the wall of the building of the chancel shown in HF-6. There is also a belfry on the front of the building that is missing in the Dittmeyer postcard, HF-384.

To the right of the Protestant Episcopal Church is St. Peter's Catholic Church and the former parochial school behind the church. The old school is being used as a parsonage. The belfry on the roof of the school, shown in earlier photographs, in this is missing.

The picturesque passage through the Blue Ridge of the united Potomac and Shenandoah



Junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, 1910.

View from Jefferson Rock looking toward the Gap.
Postcard #5, Walter E. Dittmeyer, HF-384

In the foreground is the roof of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Building No. 18-A. It is to be noted that the building appears to be whole and in use. To the right of the Protestant Episcopal Church is St. Peter's Catholic Church, remodeled in 1896. The lower portion of the Protestant Episcopal Church shows where the chancel was formerly located; a similar addition is shown on the rear of St. Peter's Catholic Church.

JUNCTION OF THE POTOMAC AND SHENANDOAH RIVERS. MEETING OF THE STATES OF MARYLAND, WEST VIRGINIA AND VIRGINIA.
HARPERS FERRY, W. VA.



No. 5.
WALTER E. DITMEYER
HARPERS FERRY, W. VA.

NHF-983

HF-983 shows the south and east sides of the ruins of the Protestant Episcopal ruins, Building No. 48-A. This was taken in 1956.

