

Historical Data
Historic Structure Report
The Nichols/Williams Building
Building 3

On Wager Lots 53A-54B
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
West Virginia

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February 1980

Preface

The purpose of this report is to up-date "Historic Building Site Survey Report for Bldg. No. 3, Wager Lot 53-High Street," [HFR 396] dated July 29, 1958, and "Historic Buildings Site Survey Report Bldg. No. 2-Wager Lot No. 54-High Street," [HFR-399] dated July 30, 1958, both prepared by Historian Charles W. Snell, on the basis of additional historical, archeological, and architectural evidence that has been discovered since 1958.

The writer wishes to thank Librarian Hilda F. Staubs of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park staff for copies of documents and photographs and to Architects Susan Shufelt and Tom Fields of the Denver Service Center's National Capital Team for copies of measured drawings of Bldg. No. 3.

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February 1980

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II. Historical Data

A. Significance

Erected by William B. Nichols in the period 1896-1907, Building No. 3 is the fifth structure to occupy this site. Its east end wall and its interior stone wall apparently incorporate the first two stories of a three story stone structure that Samuel M. Williams erected sometime between 1849 and 1876. The remainder of present Bldg. No. 3 dates from the 1896-1907 period. Erected some 40 years after the events that Harpers Ferry National Historical park was established to commemorate, Bldg. No. 3 possesses no historical significance in the Park story.

The present site of Bldg. No. 3 was first occupied by two frame dwelling houses that stood side by side; these had been erected by the Wager family in the period 1819 to 1835. In the subdivision of the Wager property that took place in 1835-36, the two houses, each located on a different lot, passed through the hands of several owners. In the 1840's both frame residences were demolished and replaced by masonry structures that contained store rooms on their first floors and living quarters on the upper floors. About 1843 on the west portion of the site now occupied by Bldg. No. 3, Richard D. Doran built a 3 ½ story brick house, 19 feet 10 inches by 22 feet. About 1850 Samuel M. Williams erected a three story stone house, 28 feet 3 ½ inches by 22 feet, on the eastern portion of the Bldg. 3 site. Williams owned and lived in his house until 1876. After passing through another ownership, William B. Nichols purchased the Williams House and lot for \$1,050 in December 1896. Richard D. Doran's heirs retained title to the brick house, which they leased to various renters, from 1843 to December 1901, when they sold the property to William B. Nichols for \$105. Apparently all of Doran's building and most of Williams' building were demolished sometime after 1896. Only the first two stories of the east and south walls of Williams' building were retained; these walls became part of Building 3 which Nichols constructed on the site sometime between 1896 and 1907.

As built by Nichols, Bldg. No. 3 straddles the two lots occupied by the pre-Civil War houses. Three stories in height, Bldg. No. 3 fronts 41 feet 2 ½ inches on High Street and is 31 feet 9 ½ inches deep (at the third story

level)). The structure contained a store on the first floor, probably a large apartment on the second floor, and apparently two smaller apartments on the third floor. Bldg. No.3 first served as William B. Nichols' grocery store.

At some date after 1917 new openings were added to the east wall: two windows and perhaps a door were added at the second level, and one or two windows were added at the third level. These changes may have reflected some interior alterations; there are indications that there have been changes in the second floor plan, on the east side of the building.

B. Chain of Title for Wager Lots Nos. 53A and 54B. The Site of Bldg. No. 3. in the Wager Six Acre Reservation. 1751 to 1953:

The land that was to include the future sites of the town of Harpers Ferry, the U.S. Armory, and Bldg. No. 3, was acquired by Robert Harpers, a Pennsylvania Mill-rite, from Lord Thomas Fairfax by a deed for 125 acres dated April 25, 1751.¹ Harper died at Harpers Ferry in October 1782 and bequeathed about 125 acres of his land, together with Bldg. 1A, the Harper House, and his ferry right across the Potomac River to Sarah Harper, his niece and then the wife of John Wager of Philadelphia.² On June 15, 1796, with the exception of six acres retained in what became known as “the Six Acre Reservation,” and an additional three-quarters of an acre known as “the Ferry Lot,” John Wager and his wife Sarah sold the balance of the land, about 118 ¼ acres to the United States Government for \$7,016.66 to be used for the purpose of erecting a National Armory to manufacture arms.³

Wager’s 6 ¾ acres of inholding in this sea of Federal-owned land was located in the lower town of Harpers Ferry, near the site of the proposed armory. This gave him a complete monopoly of all privately owned land on which mercantile and commercial structures could be built. He planned to profit as the Armory expanded and the town grew. Wager, however, died at Philadelphia on September 21, 1803, just two years after arms production got underway at the Harper’s Ferry Armory.⁴

His son, John Wager, Jr., who inherited the two reserve tracts, took up residence in Harpers Ferry in 1803. On his death on October 22, 1813, the Six Acre Reservation and the Ferry Lot passed via his will and undivided ownership to his widow, Catherine Wager (who died in 1829), and their four minor

¹ Fairfax Deed for 125 acres to Robert Harper. April 25, 1751, in Northern Neck Grants Book No. 6, p. 496, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Va.

² Last will of Robert Harper of Berkeley County, Va., dated 26 September 1782, probated in Berkeley Co., Va. on October 15, 1782. Copy in Office of the Judge Advocate General, Military Reservation Division, West Virginia Reservation File, Box 41, National Archives Record Group 153, Washington, D.C.

³ Copy of Warranty Deed of John Wager, et ux, Berkeley County, VA., to the United States, June 15, 1796, National Archives Record Group 121, Public Buildings Service, Entry 75, Washington, D.C.

⁴ The Armory work force in 1803 numbered only 20 men, so Wager did not live to see the commercial development of his Harpers Ferry Property.

children: James Bates Wager, John William Stein Wager (who died on March 23, 1823), Gerard Bond Wager, and Sarah Ann Wager.⁵

The Wager Family maintained their monopoly of the privately owned land in Harpers Ferry from 1796 to 1834, when James B. Wager overextended his fiscal operations; on July 7 of the latter year he was thrown in jail for debt, and soon forced to declare bankruptcy. On April 2, 1835, the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery for Jefferson County, Virginia, accordingly 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 Wager, now Sally Ann Swayne, the wife of Noah H. Swayne, from their father, John Wager (Jr.), deceased."⁶ The Six Acre Reservation and the 3/4th acre Ferry Lot, with the buildings standing on them, were subdivided into 56 numbered lots and these were divided equally among the three surviving Wager heirs. On October 10, 1835, the Court awarded Wager Lots No. 53 and 54, which adjoined each other and fronted on the west side of High Street, to James B. Wager.⁷ (See Map No. 1 on page 22.)

⁵ John Wager, Jr's Will is in Will Book No. 2 (1813-16), pp. 92-94, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, W. Va.

⁶ Gibson and Others vrs James B. Wager, Decree, in Deed Book No. 29, pp. 140-141, Registry of Deeds, Jefferson County Courthouse, Charles Town, W. Va., henceforth all deed books will be referred to as D.B. and are located in the Jefferson County Courthouse, unless otherwise specified.

⁷ Deed Book 29, P. 140- see the 1835 Plat-"The Wager Six Acre Reservation Drawn by James M. Brown, S.G.C.", which is located in this Deed Book

1. Chain of Title of Wager Lot 53, 1836-1896.

On January 14, 1836, the Circuit 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. A 1836 newspaper advertisement for this sale described Lot No. 53 as “One lot 48 by 34 feet with one comfortable dwelling of frame.”¹ (See Map No. 1.) On November 1, 1836, the Commissioners sold Lot 53 and its house to James Duncanson and Philip Coons, both of Harpers Ferry, for \$1,010.00.² On January 10, 1840, James Duncanson put Lot No. 53 and Lot 46, which he also purchased, into trust to secure a \$500 loan.³ On November 12, 1842, Duncanson’s trustee sold off at public auction Duncanson’s interest in Lot 53, described as “on undivided half of house and lot,” to Edmund Chambers for \$350.⁴

In 1844 Chambers and Coons subdivided Lot No. 53. On April 29 of that year Chambers sold the southern portion of Lot 53 (called 53B) and “a certain house” to 16 men for \$400.⁵ A few days later, on May 2, Philip Coons sold the norther portion of Lot 53 (here called 53A) “on which portion a large two story frame building stands..” to a group of 26 men for \$650.⁶ The two groups of men put their acquisitions into trust to secure the purchase money. Neither group was able to complete their payments and trustees accordingly offered Lot 53 for sale at public auction in 1845. Philip Coons repurchased Lot 53A and the two-story frame house for \$499 on May 1.⁷ On August 18, 1845, William Moore purchased Lot 53B and its frame house for \$351.⁸

On January 16, 1849, the two owners of Lot 53 entered into a formal deed of petition, which reads in part:

¹ Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1836, p. 4, c. 1, Charles Town, Va. Newspaper that was published weekly.

² Deed of Bargin & Sale, January 1, 1840, D.B. 24, pp.214-215.

³ Deed of Trust, January 10, 1840, D.B. 24, p. 214-215.

⁴ Deed of B. & S., November 12, 1842, D.B. 27, p. 61.

⁵ Deed of B. & S., April 29, 1844, and Deed of Trust, D.B. 27, p. 126-127.

⁶ Deed of B. & S., May 2, 1844, and Deed of Trust, D.B. 27, p. 177.

⁷ Deed of B. & S., May 1, 1845, and D.B. 27, p. 481.

⁸ Deed of B. & S., August 18, 1845, D.B. 28, p. 236-237

Whereas Philip Coons and William H. Moore are owners in common of Lot No 53. And whereas a verbal agreement has been heretofore made by said Coons and the assigner of the said Moore, for the subdivision of Lot No. 53, whereby Coons was to have in fee simple that portion of the west end of said Lot No. 53 (Lot 53A), as would be laid off by a line of 28 feet 3 ½ inches from the northwest corner of Lot 53, laid off on the north or front of said lot - the said division line to run between the large two story frame building on the portion of said lot, and the single frame dwelling on the other portion, and to intersect in the rear on the south the Public Walk, and to embrace all the residue of said lot lying west of said intersecting division line - and whereby also the said Moore was to have the whole of the residue of said Lot No. 53 (that is 53B), not specially above allotted to the said Coons, including the brick chimney in the said line, which is declared to belong exclusively to said W.B. Moore, who hereby covenants which the said Coons to permit him, at all time hereafter to use the flues of the said chimney for this portion of the house, until the said Moore shall build or tear it down, the right to do which is acknowledged by this article...⁹

Park Building No. 3 stands partly on the northwest portion of Lot 53-that is Lot 53A and partly on Lot 54. The ownership of the southwest portion of Lot 53 - Lot 53B, which is not occupied by Bldg. No. 3 can at this point be dropped from further consideration in this study. Lot 53A, the northwest portion of Lot 53, fronted 28 feet 3 ½ inches on High Street, was 28 feet deep on either side, and faced 28 feet and 3 ½ inches on the Public Walk in the rear in 1849. The lot was occupied by a large two-story frame dwelling.¹⁰

Philip Coons held title to Lot 53A from May 1, 1845 to January 17, 1849; on this latter date he sold the property to George Rothery for \$900.¹¹ Rothery

⁹ Deed of Partition, January 16, 1849, D.B. 30, P. 497.

¹⁰ Virginia Free Press, August 9, 1849, P. 3, C. 1, gives the dimensions of Coon's lot in full.

¹¹ Deed of Trust, January 17, 1849, D.B. 30, pp. 356-57; Release of Trust, August 17, 1849 Deed Book 30, P. 493.

held the lot for about seven months and on August 17, 1849, sold Lot 53A to Samuel M. Williams for \$893.¹²

Williams owned Lot 53A for 27 years and on July 26, 1876, sold the lot, which still “fronted 28 feet 3 ½ inches on the north side of High Street” and had a building standing on it, to William Exum for \$600.¹³ Twenty years later on December 16, 1896, William Exum sold Lot 53A and the building on it to William B. Nichols for \$1,050.00. In 1896 Lot 53A still fronted 28 feet 3 ½ inches on High Street and also the same width on the Public Walk in the rear.¹⁴ On December 2, 1901, Nichols next acquired adjacent Lot 54B for the sum of \$105, thus uniting under one ownership for the first time, the land now occupied by Park Bldg. No. 3.¹⁵ We will now pause at this point in the narrative to consider the ownership of Lot 54B in the period of 1836 to 1901.

¹² Deed of B. & S., August 17, 1849, Deed B. 30, 494-95; and Deed of Trust, August 17, 1849, D.B. 30, p. 496.

¹³ Deed of B.26, 1876, D.B. p. 387-388

¹⁴ Deed of B. & S., December 16, 1896, D.B. 82, p. 476.

¹⁵ Deed of B. & S., December 2, 1901, D.B. 91, P. 28.

2. Chain of Title of Wager Lot 54, 1836-1901

On October 10, 1835, it will be recalled, the Circuit Court of Law and Chancery for Jefferson County, in dividing up the Wager property among the three heirs, awarded Wager Lot No. 54 to James B. Wager. 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 for the purpose of settling his debts. Lot No. 54 fronted 41 feet on High Street, was 20 feet deep on the north end, fronted about 39 feet two inches in the rear on the Public Walk, and was about 28 feet deep on the south end. Lot No. 54 also contained “one comfortable dwelling house of frame” in 1836.¹ (See Map No. 1.)

On October 5, 1837, the Commissioners sold Lot No. 54, “with the buildings and houses thereon” to George W. Cutshaw for the sum of \$500.² Six years later, on July 25, 1843, Cutshaw sold to Richard D. Doran, a Harpers Ferry Merchant, for \$275:

“...the southeast part of Lot No. 54 and being so much of said lot as lies between the brick house situated hereon (Lot 54A), in which the said Cutshaw now lives, and the Lot No. 53. The lot or part of lot herein conveyed fronts on High Street nineteen feet 10 inches, and extends back the width of said Lot No. 54...”³

Doran’s acquisition, called Lot 54B, fronted 19 feet 10 inches on High Street, was about 26 feet deep on the north end. 28 feet on the south end where it abutted on Lot No. 53, and was about 17 feet in the rear where it faced Public Walk.

Park Building No. 3 was to be constructed in part on Lot No. 54B and the history of this portion of Lot 54 will be traced, while that of Wager Lot No. 54A is of no further concern in this study.

Richard D. Doran owned Lot No. 54B from 1843 until his death in 1847; it then passed to his brother Michael Doran, also a Harper’s Ferry merchant and

¹ Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1836, p. 4, c. 1.

² Deed of B. & S., October 5, 1837, D.B. 22, p. 254-55.

³ Deed of B. & S., July 25, 1843, D.B. 26, p. 412-13.

his heirs from 1847 to 1901. On December 2, 1901, Kate Doran and other Michael Doran heirs sold Lot No 54B to William B. Nichols for \$105.⁴ Nichols, who had acquired adjacent Lot No. 53A in 1896, thus united for the first time, the land presently occupied by Park Bldg. No. 3.

3. Ownership of Bldg. No. 3, Lots 53A-54B, 1901-1953

William B. Nichols and his heirs owned Lots 53A-54B from December 2, 1901 to 1923. On March 7, 1923, Charles F. Nichols, a heir of William, sold the lot and building on it to Charles N. Jones for \$4,000.⁵ Jones owned the property for 30 years. On January 19, 1953 Charles N. Jones sold Lots 53A-54B and Bldg. No. 3 to the State of West Virginia, as a result of a court decree, for the sum of 12,500.⁶ The 1953 deed described this property as fronting 48.5 feet on the west side of High Street, then running back 47 feet with boundary line on the south side with Lot No. 53B, then with Public Walk in the rear for 41 feet, and then on the north end with the line of Lot No. 54A 38.33 feet to High Street.

The original frontage of lots 53A-54B combined on High Street was 48 feet 1 ½ inches, then 28 feet on the south side with Lot 53B, then 49 feet with the Public Walk in the rear, and running 26 feet with the line for Lot 54A to High Street.

At some date after 1900 the original site of the lot was expanded to the rear by claiming portions of the Public Walk that had never been a part of either lot.

On December 19, 1953, the State of West Virginia conveyed Lots No. 53A-54B together with Bldg. No 3, to the United States for the inclusion in the authorized Harpers Ferry National Monument.⁷

⁴ Deed of B. & S., December 2, 1901, D.B. 91, p. 28.

⁵ Deed of B. & S., March 7, 1923, D.B. 123, p. 388

⁶ Deed of B. & S., January 19, 1953, D.B. 191, p. 132.

⁷ Deed of B. & S., December 19, 1953, D.B. 199, p. 41.

C. Construction and Use of Buildings on Lots 53A-54B, 1835-1896:

1. Buildings on Lot 54B

As has been noted, the 1836 newspaper advertisement announcing the sale of James B. Wager's real estate at public auction described Lot No. 54 as containing "one comfortable dwelling house," which had been erected by the Wager family at some unknown date prior to 1836.¹ The evidence that follows indicates that the wooden residence was probably located on the eastern portion (Lot 54B of Lot No. 54. George W. Cutshaw purchased Lot No. 54 and house on October 5, 1837 for \$500. In 1839 he erected a three story brick structure on the western part of Lot 54 (that is, on Lot 54A). The building was completed by January 1840 and contained a "Tailoring Establishment" in "the Basement story of his Dwelling house."²

A deed of trust that Cutshaw made on Lot 54 on May 22, 1840 reveals that "...there are two houses, one a frame building and the other a brick building on said lot."³

On July 25, 1843, Cutshaw sold the eastern portion of Lot 54 (Lot 54B) and the frame dwelling house on it to Richard D. Doran for \$275.⁴ At some undetermined date after 1843 but prior to his death in 1847, Richard D. Doran tore down the frame dwelling and erected a 3 ½ story brick dwelling in its place. This construction is documented by an advertisement placed by George Rothery in the newspaper in August 1849, when he placed his adjacent Wager Lot No. 53B on the market. Rothery described his two-story frame house on Lot 53B as "...situated on the southwest side of High Street, between the stone steps leading to the Catholic Church, and the new brick house just built by R.D. Doran, Esq., and adjoining the latter..."⁵

¹ Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1836, p. 4, c. 1.

² Harper's Ferry Constitutionalist, January 8, 1840, p. 3.

³ Deed of Trust, May 22, 1840, D.B. 24, pp. 289-90; A deed of trust made by Cutshaw on December 1, 1855 also states "...the House aforesaid being three stories built of brick..which the said Cutshaw now resides in a family residence and Tailor Shop...", D.B. 35, P. 184.

⁴ Deed of B. & S., July 23, 1843, D. B. 26, pp. 412-13.

⁵ Virginia Free Press, August 9, 1849, p. 3, c. 1.

Doran's brick house fronted on High Street 19 feet 10 inches the full width of Lot 54B, and its maximum depth, base on lot limitations with the high cliff at the rear, was 26 feet. Photographs, taken in 1859, 1861, 1880-82, and 1892-96, show Richard D. Doran's brick house in considerable detail. These reveal that it was a 3 ½ story brick structure with a gable roof and an end chimney built within the walls at the east (left) side. One dormer was located in the front (North) slope of the roof and there may have been a second dormer centered in the rear roof slope. Fronting High Street 19 feet 10 inches, the edifice was three bays wide, abutting on the adjacent structures, and about 22 feet deep. Its rear walls were set about six feet from the cliff behind the house, thus creating an areaway there, where there was a rear one-story frame addition.⁶ The third story of the brick house rose above the cliff in the rear.

The doors in the first and second stories of the High Street façade were located in the center bays and there probably was an iron ornamental balcony set at the second floor level by the 1880's. Windows had six over six lights and were topped by flat brick arches. The first floor probably contained an area that could be used as a shop and the upper 2 ½ stories served as a dwelling. The house did not have a cellar. (See Map No. 2 on page 24 for 1894 plan of house.)

Richard D. Doran, who built the house, and Michael Doran, his brother, who inherited the structure in 1847, where both well-to-do Harpers Ferry merchants and they appear to have rented out the Lot 54B property.⁷ The census of 1850 suggests that three Irish families were living in this house, namely John Arrear, a 25-year "Hotel Keeper," his wife Margaret, their two children and Julia Whaley; William Malory, an Armorer, his wife and their two children and Catherine Donavine; and the Martha Walsh family, with seven members.⁸

⁶ Sanborn Map of Harpers Ferry, W. Va., Nov. 1894.

⁷ National Archives Record Group No. 29, Population Schedules of the 10th Census of the United States, 1880, National Archives microfilm Reel 1405 indicated that Michael Doran had been born in Ireland, was 75 years old in 1880 and that he was a "retail grocer."

⁸ National Archives Record Group 29, Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Volume 12, p. 414.

In 1860 the house was apparently rented to an Irish family of three, consisting of Patrick Carroll, a 28 year old "Grocery Keeper," Mary J. Carroll, aged 16, and Susan Carroll, age one, the two girls having been born in Virginia.⁹ Carroll's Grocery store may have been located on the first floor of the Lot 54B house. The Sanborn Company Insurance Maps of Harpers Ferry, prepared in 1894, show that the first floor of the Lot 54B house was then being used as a cobbler shop. Photograph HF-648 reveals that the structure deteriorated during the last quarter of the 19th century: in this view the second story balcony has been removed. In any event, William B. Nichols was able to purchase Lot 54B for the modest sum of \$105 on December 1, 1901.

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2. Buildings on Lot No. 53A: 1836-1901

As has been noted, Lot 53A, the western portion of Lot 53, was occupied by a large two-story frame dwelling that had been erected by the Wager family at some unknown date prior to 1836. George Rothery purchased Lot 53A and house for \$900 on January 17, 1849. Deciding to sell this property in August 1849, Rothery's newspaper notice of the forthcoming sale on August 11 provides considerable data on the state of his lot and house. These, he announced, are

Situated on the south west side of High Street, between the stone steps leading to the Catholic Church, and the new brick house just built by R.D. Doran (and located on adjacent Lot 54B), and adjoining the latter. The lot fronts on High Street 28 feet 3 ½ inches, and is bounded on the northwest by the new brick house and lot belonging to R. D. Doran, and on the southeast side by a small frame house and Lot (Lot No. 53B) belonging to William H. Moore, and runs back to the public walk on the hill 28 feet, thence along said walk 28 feet 3 ½ inches, and then to High Street 28 feet...

The Dwelling House is 28 feet 3 ½ inches by 18 feet, and if a small sum in repairs and improvement was expended upon it, would readily rent for \$150 per annum, and there is room on the rear of the lot, facing the public walk, for another house of the same dimensions.¹

Again as has been noted, Samuel M. Williams purchased the Lot 53A property on August 17, 1849 for the sum of \$893.

Photographs HF-648 and HF-787, taken sometime between 1876 and 1896, indicate that the two-story frame dwelling on Lot 53A was replaced by a three-story stone building with a shed roof. Since the stone building does not look new in these photographs, it is assumed that the stone building was constructed by Williams some time between August 1849, the date he purchased Lot 53A and July, 1876, the date he sold the lot.

Fronting on High Street, the stone structure was 28 feet 3 ½ inches, or three bays, wide and extended back (south) about 22 feet, leaving an areaway of perhaps six feet in width in the rear between the rear elevation and the

¹ Virginia Free Press, August 9, 1849, p. 3, c. 1.

face of the cliff in back of the house. By 1894 there was a small one-story frame addition located in this rear areaway.² (See map No. 2 on page 24 for 1894 plan.)

The exterior walls of the first two stories of the façade were pargeted; the third floor east (left) side wall may have been built of brick (see photographs HF-648 and HF-787). The front entrance was located in the center bay of the first story and was flanked by one window on either side. The second and third stories on the High Street elevation each had three windows. The windows had six-over-six lights and were topped by flat arches. There were no openings in the side walls. The house did not have a cellar.

The house was used during the 1849-1861 period as a residence. In 1850, Samuel M. Williams, 48 years old and a "Toll Gatherer," and his family of five were residing there, together with three people who were probably boarding there.³ In 1860 the dwelling was apparently rented and occupied by William Wilson, a 49 year old laborer, and his family of five.⁴

Samuel M. Williams owned a Lot 53A property from 1849 to 1876 and probably resided in the house after the Civil War. The census of 1870 indicates that Williams had been born in Maryland was then 60 years old and working as a "watchman." The value of the real estate he owned was estimated to be \$1,000.⁵

As has been mentioned, Williams sold Lot 53A and its stone house to William Exum for \$600.00 of July 26, 1876. Born in Belgian, Exum was 34 years old in 1880 and a tinsmith by trade. He and his wife Lousia, 29, and their three

² Sanborn Map Company's Insurance Maps of Harpers Ferry, W. V., Nov. 1894.

³ National Archives Record Group 29, Records of the Bureau of the Census Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Virginia, Volume 12, Jefferson County (part), p. 411.

⁴ National Archives Record Group 29, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Virginia, Vol. 13, Jefferson County (part), p. 10, 196.

⁵ National Archives Record Group 29, Population Schedules of the Ninth Census the United States, 1870, National Archives Microfilm Reel No. 1689, p. 14 of census of town of Harper's Ferry.

children William, aged 11, John 7, and Anna, 3, probably resided at the lot 53A house from 1876 to 1896.⁶

The house was apparently in fair condition in 1896, for Exum was able to sell it to William B. Nichols for \$1,050.00 on December 16 of that year.

3. Construction of Bldg. No. 3

The available documentary evidence indicates that William B. Nichols constructed Bldg. No. 3 at some undetermined date after December 16, 1896, when he first acquired title to Lot 53A area occupied by the eastern section of Bldg. No. 3, and prior to September 1907, when Bldg. No. 3 is fully delineated in its final form on the Sanborn Company Insurance Maps of Harpers Ferry of that date. (See Map No. 3.) The 1907 map shows Bldg. No. 3 to be a three story structure at 234-235 High Street, with the first story being used as a grocery store and the upper stories as residence.

The combined dimensions of Lot 53A-54B, according to the 1836-1837 deeds was: 48 feet 1 ½ inch frontage on High street, a 49 foot 5 ½ inch frontage on the public walk in the rear, with depth of 26 feet at the west end of the lot and a depth of 28 feet on the east side. The two mid-19th century structures had jointly occupied the full width or frontage of these lots on High Street, and each had extended back about 22 feet, leaving an open area of about 7 or 8 feet between the rear wall of the houses and the face of the living cliff.

A study of the modern measured drawings of Bldg. No. 3, after comparing them with the above-listed historical dimensions of the lot, reveals the following data. Bldg. No. 3 fronts 41 feet 2 ¼ inches on High Street and 41 feet 9 inches on the public walk in the rear, thus leaving about six feet 11

⁶ National Archives Record Group 29, Population Schedules of the 10th Census of the United States, 1880, National Archives Microfilm Reel No. 1405, page 10 of the town of Harper's Ferry census.

inches of the original frontage of 48 feet 1 ½ inches on High Street vacant land. The west (upper or right) end wall has been constructed to run from High Street back against the living cliff, thus enclosing the open areaway that once existed behind the mid-19th century buildings. At the first floor level the west end wall is 23 feet 5 ½ inches wide, at the second floor level it is 24 feet 11 ¾ inches wide, and at the third story it is 31 feet 8 ¼ inches wide, that is 8 feet 2 ¾ inches wider or longer than the width of the first story. As a result of this additional length, the floor level of the third story at the rear is constructed so that it rests on top of the cliff and opens directly on the public walk. Based on the Sanborn-Perris Insurance Maps neither of the mid-19th century structures that once stood on this property ever possessed this feature. The east (lower or left) end wall has also been constructed, like the west wall, to run from High Street up against the face of the cliff. The width of the east wall is, at the first floor level 28 feet 8 inches, at the second floor level, 29 feet 7 ¾ inches, and at the third floor level, 31 feet 9 ½ inches.

By not utilizing the full frontage of his lot, Nichols was also able to introduce windows into his east and west end walls, at the third story levels, features that had not been included in the mid-19th century historic structures because these buildings had abutted up tightly against one and other.

A study of the measured drawings suggests that Nichols retained 1 foot 9 ¾ inches thick stone east (end) and south (rear) walls of the 1839 Samuel Williams house on Lot 53A for the first and second story levels in his 1902-1907 construction of Bldg. 3. A 6' ± wall (stone at the first level and brick at the second) was constructed from the southeast corner of the Williams house

to the face of the cliff to enclose the former open rear areaway. If this theory is correct, then the original Samuel Williams house was 22 feet deep on the east end wall and 28 feet 3 ½ inches wide on the north (front) elevation.

Since Nichols purchased Lot 53A in 1896, but did not purchase Lot 54B until 1901, the eastern section of Building 3 constructed on Lot 53A, may have been constructed prior to the western section, constructed on Lot 54B.

Nichols, who was 53 years old in 1900 and a grocer, built Bldg. No. 3 to serve as a store on the first floor and apparently as an apartment house, with perhaps one large apartment located on the second floor and two smaller set of living quarters situated on the third floor. The second floor plan may have been revised after 1919.

Photographs HF 142, made about 1902-07, and HF 378, made during World War I, both indicate that the present second story window located near the northeast (front) corner of the east end wall was not a part of the original construction, but was introduced at some unknown date after 1919. The southeast (rear) portion of the east end wall is not visible in these two photos, but it is also possible that present second window and the present door in this wall were also not introduced at the second floor level until after 1919. If this was the case, then the second floor may have originally been intended for use as a single family residence.

4. Description of Building No. 3

Bldg. No. 3 is a three-story brick structure with a very low pitched gable roof. The building fronts 41 feet 2 ¼ inches on High Street and is 31 feet 9 ¼ inches deep (at the third floor level). The north or front (Hight Street) elevation is divided into six bays on each of the three floors. The extreme

right (northwest) bay contains the door to the stair hall that leads to the second and third floors. The third bay from this same corner contains the door that opens into the store room that occupies the entire first floor. The other four first floor bays are occupied by large shop windows. The tall 12 windows in the two stories above are topped by segmental brick arches. The west (right) end wall contains three tall windows with segmental brick arches, similar to those in front, set at the third floor level. There are no window openings on the first and second stories of the west elevation.

The east elevation contains three more tall windows topped with segmental brick arches set in the third story in the same positions as the windows in the west wall. The east end wall today also contains two tall windows under the center and northeast windows of the third story and a doorway under the third story window in the southeast bay (rear) bay.⁷ These three openings in the second floor level were probably added at some undetermined date after 1919 and prior to 1953. The rear or south elevation rises one story above the cliff and this third story opens directly on to the top of the cliff. This elevation is divided into six bays. The second and fifth bays are occupied by doorways and the other four bays by windows. All six of these openings are topped by segmental brick arches, similar to the original openings found on the other three elevations. The two doorways on the rear third story elevation suggests that the third story was designed for use as a duplex apartment. A third apartment may have occupied the second floor.

The 1907 map indicates that a one-story frame addition, probably a covered port, once extended across most of the full width of the rear elevation.

⁷ The two second-story windows are located in the parged stone wall; the stone is arched at the top of openings. There is a steel lintel above the door.

The inventory of Buildings prepared by the Henry C. Edwards and John T. Willett in 1955 to accompany the Architectural Base Map of Harpers Ferry, Drawing No. NM-HF - 3055, offers the following information of the state of Bldg. No. 3 when the Park Service took charge of the structure. "Bldg. No. 3 Store & Dwelling. Built 1849, Number of Stories 2 (sic-3). Square feet per floor 1,353. Cost to West Va. \$9,000 (sic-\$12,000). Constriction: Walls: brick, Roof, Sheet Metal; interior Part & Sash: Wood; Wood porch upper level (Third floor rear). Condition, September 1955: Relatively good, some deterioration interior low floors. Remarks: Belong to George Rothery, August 17, 1849: Top floor now remodeled for NPS Superintendent's residence." The second floor was also remodeled by 1957 to serve as another residence for a Park Service employee.

Bibliography

I. Primary Material

1. Deed Books, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, W.Va.
2. Will Books, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, W.Va.
3. National Archives Record Group No. 29, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules of the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Censuses of the United States, 1850-1900. Washington D.C.

Censuses for the years 1850 to 1870 available on Microfilm at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library.

4. Virginia Free Press, Charles Town, Va. A weekly newspaper summarizing local news that was published at Charles Town from 1824 to 1861. Available for use on nine reels of microfilm at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library.
5. Harper's Ferry Constitutionalist, a weekly newspaper that was published briefly in Harpers Ferry. Available on microfilm in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library.
6. Virginia Free Press, Charles Town, West Virginia. A weekly newspaper published from 1865 to 1896. Available (with some gaps) at Shepherds College, Shepherdstown, W.Va., on microfilm. Some bound volumes of original papers in Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, W.Va.
7. Spirit of Jefferson, Charles Town, W.Va. A weekly newspaper published 1865 to 1955 (and to date), available on microfilm at the University of West Virginia, Morgantown, W.Va.

II. National Park Service Reports:

1. Snell, Charles W., "Historic Buildings Site Survey Report for Bldg., No. 3 - Wager Lot No. 53 - High Street - The Williams and Koonce Lots, Harpers Ferry National Monument, West Virginia," (National Park Service typescript, Harpers Ferry NM, July 29, 1958), 19 pp, 1 map, 4 photos.

Detailed history of buildings and use thereof, 1835-1861. Section on Wager Lot. 53A is accurate down to 1849, but the historical photos showing the large 3 story bldg. that Williams erected on Lot 53A in the period 1849-61, were not discovered until several years after this study was written. The present report thus updates that section.

2. Snell, Charles W., "Historic Buildings Site Survey Report for Bldg. No. 2 - Wager Lot No. 54 - High Street, The George W. Cutshaw and Michael Doran Lots, Harpers Ferry National Monument, West Virginia," (National Park Service typescript, Harpers Ferry NM, July 30, 1958). 13pp., 1 map.

A detailed history of the ownership, buildings on, and use thereof on Lot 54A and 54B from 1835 to 1861.

Map No. 1

A portion of the "Plat of the Wager Six Acre Reservation and the Three-Fourth of an Acre Ferry Lot Reservation, showing the sub-division of this land of John Wager, Jr., among his three heirs, October 10, 1835. By James M. Brown, S.G.C., Scale: 1" equals 60'."

The original of the Plat is in Deed Book No. 29, at Page 140, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, W. Va.

From the Tracing of the original made by Architect Archie W. Franzen, July 11, 1957 and numbered as Harpers Ferry National Monument Master Plan Drawing No. NM-HF 3076.

The Buildings as shown on this plat have been added by Historian Charles W. Snell on the basis of the announcement and description of the lots and buildings of James B. Wager that were to be offered for sale at public auction, which appeared in the Virginia Free Press, April 7, 1836, pg. 4, c. 1., and from "Map of Harper's Ferry Showing the Location of the Winchester and Potomac Railroad. Drawn by Lieuts. White, Allen and R.S. Smith, U.S. Army, under the direction of James Kearney, Lt. Col. And T.E - Map No. 2. Approved by President Andrew H. Jackson, 27th January 1835. Scale: 100' to 1'."

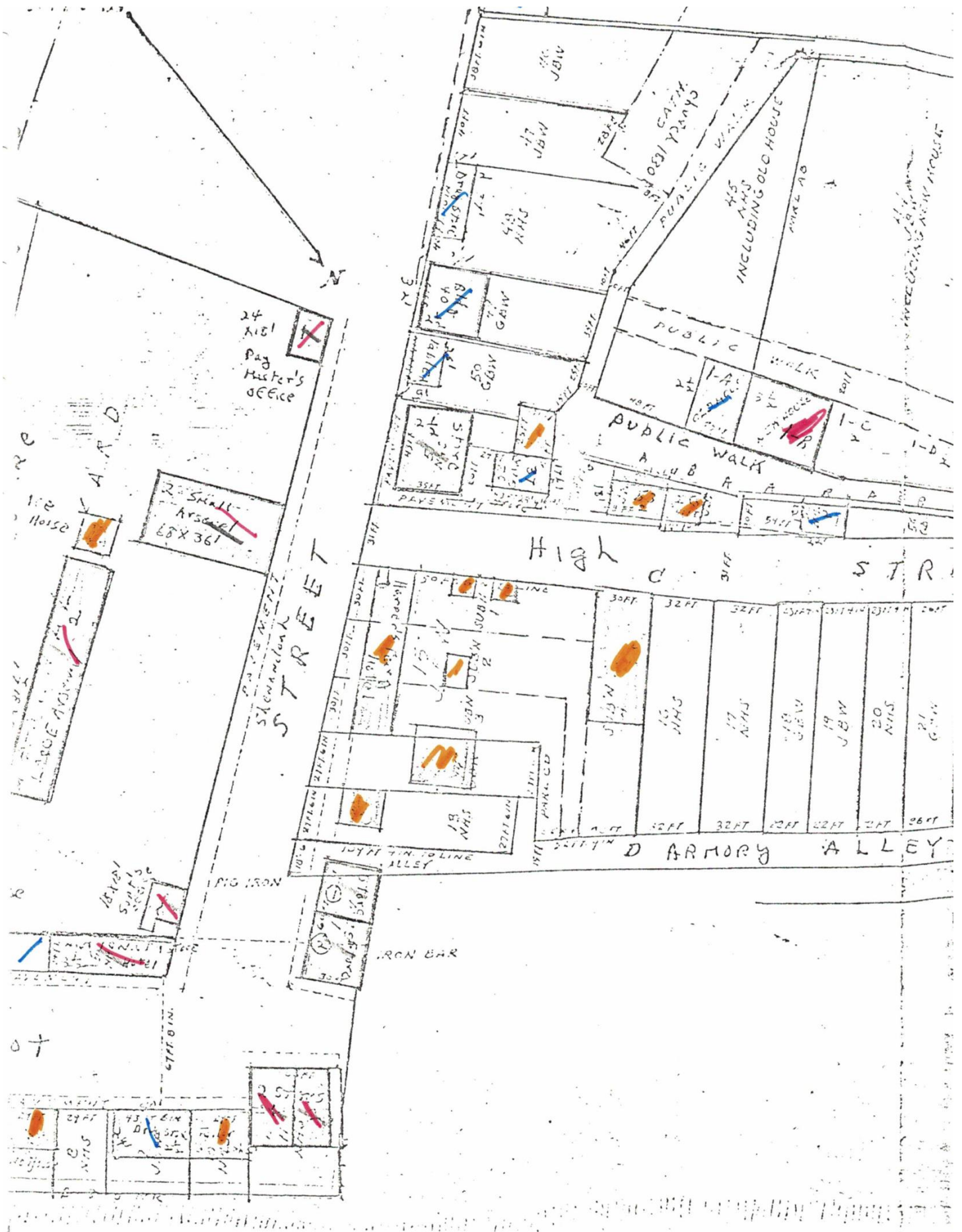
This map, prepared in 1834, has been reproduced as part of Harpers Ferry National Monument Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF 3002. The original of the map is in the National Archives Record Group No. 77 - Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Fortification Map Files, Drawer 150 - sheet 82 part 2, Washington, D.C.

Buildings colored in red are brick.

Buildings colored in blue are stone.

Buildings colored in yellow are frame.

The nature of the materials of which the structures have been constructed has been determined by Historian Snell.



Map No 2

Portion of "The Sanborn Perris Maps of Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia, November, 1894, Scale: 50 feet to one inch." A set of the original plates of this Atlas are in the Library collections of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Buildings colored red are of brick construction.

Buildings colored blue are of stone construction.

Buildings colored yellow are of frame construction.

The material of which these structures are constructed are shown on the 1894 insurance maps.

This map is of interest because the line of brick and structures situated on Wager Lots No. 53 to 56 inclusive, and fronting on the north side of High Street were all constructed prior to the Civil War and all had been demolished as ruins by the late 1930's.

To the right of the stone steps leading to the Catholic Church can be seen the original 3 story stone (shown here as brick) house that was erected by Samuel M. William about 1850, this structure fronted 28 feet 3 ½ inches on High Street and was about 22 feet deep. Not the 1 story frame addition in the rear, located between the rear wall of the house and face of the cliff. This may have been an outhouse.

To the right, and adjacent to Williams' Lot 53A House, can be seen the 3 ½ story brick structure that Richard D. Doran built on Lot 54B about 1843. The Doran house fronted 19 feet 10 inches on High Street and was about 22 feet deep. The Lot 54B house also has a one-story frame addition located in the rear, between the back wall of the structure and the face of the cliff.

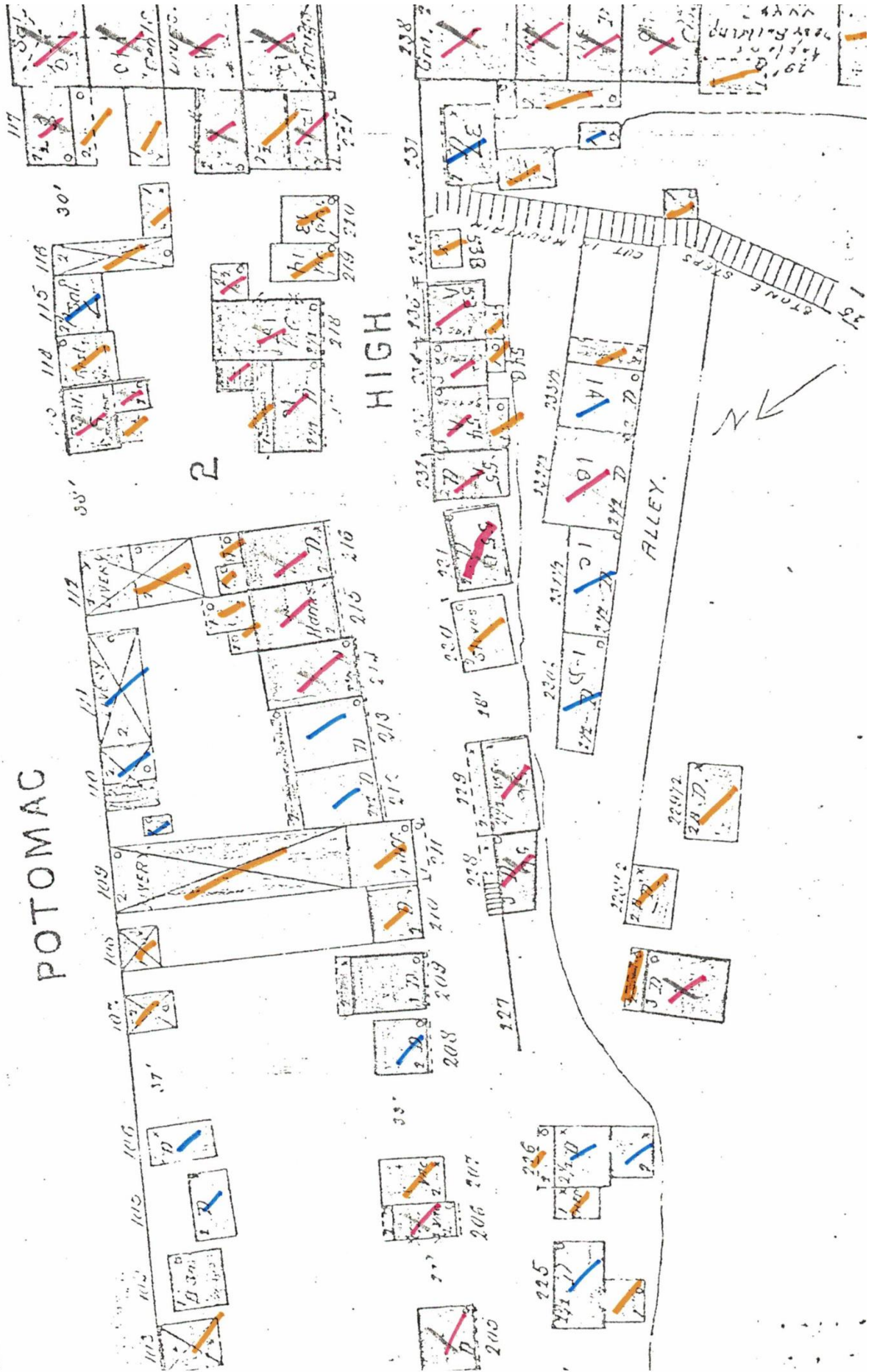
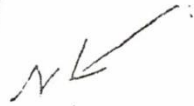
The frame structures shown on Lots 53B and 56A were erected after the Civil War.

POTOMAC

HIGH

2

ALLEY.



Map No 3

“Sanborn Company Map of Harpers Ferry, September 1907,” Scale 50 feet to one inch. A complete set of these insurance maps of the town are in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library.

Buildings colored red are brick.

Buildings colored blue are stone.

Buildings colored yellow are of frame construction.

Bldg. No. 3, located on Wager Lots 53A-54B, stands to the right of the stone steps leading to the Catholic Church. Erected by William B. Nichols in the period 1902-07, Bldg. No. 3 fronts 41 feet 2 ¼ inches on High Street and is 31 feet 9 ¼ inches deep (at the third story level). Note the one-story frame addition to the rear of Bldg. 3, located on the top of the cliff, at the third story level. This may have been a porch.

By comparing the 1894 and 1907 maps, it appears that the pre-Civil War house located on Lot 55-54A in 1894 has been demolished by 1907 and similarly the house on Lot 55A in 1894 has been marked as “ruins” in 1907.



PHOTO NO. 1

High Street, Harper's Ferry, Ca. 1871

Circa. 1870-1871

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF-33

This photograph was probably taken in 1870 or 1871 because (1) the three-story brick store and dwelling, erected on Lot 7, Block A, Shenandoah Street in 1870, is visible at the end of High Street, standing on the south side of Shenandoah Street. (2) The wooden sign projecting out over the street at the corner of High and Shenandoah Streets from Bldg. 12 read "Drug Store". Philip P. T. Stephenson and George B. Stephenson, doctor and druggist, sold Bldg. No. 12 and 12A to Joshua Cavalier in deeds dated September 1, 1870 and August 1, 1871. Photo HF-33 was apparently taken prior to the Stephensons removing their shop from Bldg. No. 12.

View is taken from high Street looking east to Shenandoah Street along the Public Walks that ran along the front and rear of Marmion Row (Park Bldgs. 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D) which is visible in center. To the left of Marmion Row and fronting on High Street are the mid-19th century houses that were located on Wager lots 53, 54, 55, and 56. The first house visible on these lots, a three story structure built of brick and stone, was Thomas Boerly's tavern and residence in 1859. Built about 1843, the edifice was located on Wager Lot No. 56C. The next house, a 2 ½ brick structure with a covered two-story porch on its front, was built about 1842, located on Lot 56B and was probably the shop and residence of John McCall, a shoemaker in 1959. The next structure in line, a three and one half story brick house that had been built by Abraham Fleming in 1841 on Lot 56A.



PHOTO NO. 2

William Exum's Tinsmith Shop, Lot 53A, Circa 1882

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 787

The photo was made after July 26, 1876 and prior to December 16, 1896, during the period that the tinsmith William Exum owned the 3-story stone house that was located on Wager Lot 53A - Not Exum sign on the third story level of his end wall and the large tea kettle sign in front of his shop, which was located on the first floor.

Bldgs. From left to right: Wooden steps leading to Bldg. No. 37; stone steps leading to the Catholic Church; small on-story frame shop located on Lot 53B, next Exum's tin shop and residence, located on Wager Lot 53A; next the 3 1/2 -story brick house on Wager Lot 54B, erected by Richard Doran about 1843. The Exum-Doran buildings were to be the future site of Park Bldg. No. 3: The next 3 ½ story brick house with an iron balcony at the second floor level was erected on Lot 54A in 1839 by George W. Cutshaw and served as his tailor shop and residence. Next, located on Lot 55A, also with a small iron balcony at the second floor level, is the 3 ½ story brick house built by John Gibson in 1848 and used and known as the "Green House" tavern for many years. Finally, the two story wooden porch visible at the far end of this line of four houses is probably that of the 2 ½-story brick house that Gerard B. Wager built on Lot 56B about 1845.

This photograph was made on the same day as Photo HF-648, which follows. (Note the cloth sign hanging from the iron balcony of Bldg. 16, right hand side of photo in both photographs.)



PHOTO NO. 3

High Street, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, Circa 1882

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 648

View made from near the junction of High Street with Shenandoah Street, looking up High Street. This view was made on the same day as Photo HF-787.

Buildings on the left (south) side of High Street: Left to Right: The 3 story stone house that was erected by Samuel M. Williams on Wager Lot 53A about 1849-1850 and occupying the eastern portion of the future site of Bldg. No. 3; the 3 ½ story brick structure that was erected by Richard D. Doran about 1843 on Lot No. 54B, the western portion of the future site of Bldg. 3; next - the 3 ½ story brick dwelling and tailor shop that George W. Cutshaw constructed on Lot No. 54A in 1839; the 3 ½-story brick house that was known as "the Green House" - a tavern and oyster house; located on Lot 55A. Finally, the two-story wooden porch visible is probably that of the 2 ½-story brick house that Gerard B. Wager built on Lot 56B about 1845.

Note that the ornamental iron balcony of the Doran house on Lot 54B is missing and the second story center door opens out into space.

William B. Nichols purchase the house on Lot 53A in December 1896 and the structure on Lot 54B in December 1901. He demolished all of the House on Lot 54B and most of the structure on Lot 53A in the period 1902-07 in order to erect present Bldg. No. 3.

On the right or north side of High Street, from right to left. Bldg. 12A, Bldg. 13, Bldg. 14 - Alfred Burton's Jewelry Shop, above Bldg. 14, part of Bldg. 15, and Bldg. 16, with iron balcony and cloth sign in front. Next Bldgs. on Wager Lots 18, 19, 20, 21, etc.



PHOTO NO. 4

The Public Walk In Front Of Marmion Row

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 79

View made from the stone steps looking west up the Public walk that runs between Marmion Row, Park Bldg. No. 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D (on the left, and the rear elevations of houses that once stood on Wager Lots 53, 54, 55, and 56, fronting on High Street.

This photograph was taken during the period 1882-1889.

At the right side of the photo, reading from right to left. Picket fence and one-story frame shed located on Wager Lot 53A and forming the backyard of William Exum, tinsmith, from 1876 to 1896. Next, with small boy standing in front of, Wager Lot 54B; also with frame addition. Brick house fronting on top of cliff is located on Lot 55A, next and lower brick house, located on Lot 55B: House with only roof visible, located on Lot 56A; house with brick gable end wall and chimney is located on Wager Lot 56B.

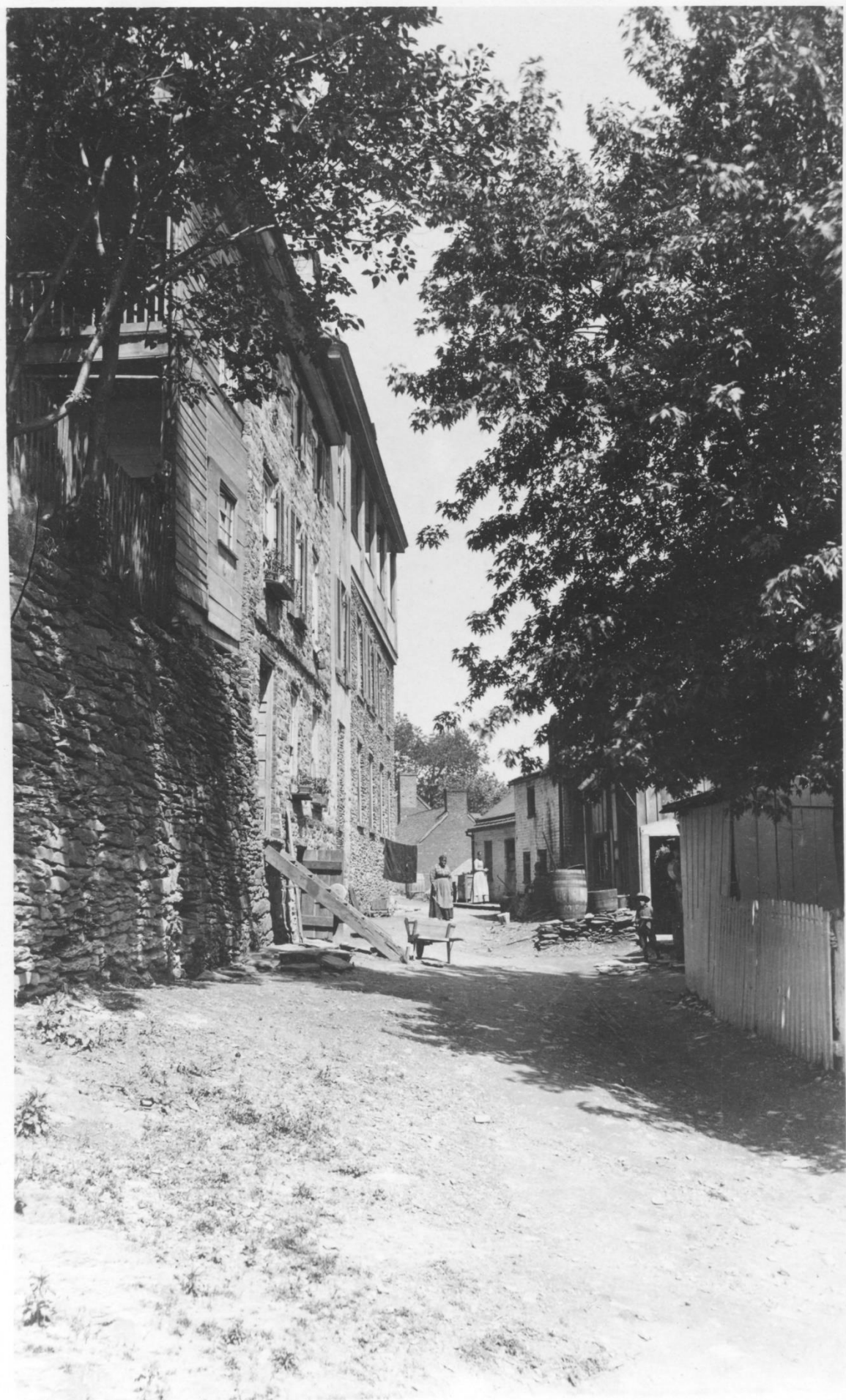


PHOTO NO. 5

Harpers Ferry From Loudoun Heights, 1892-96

National Geographical File No. 140321-A

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 99

This photograph was taken after 1892, because the B. & O. R.R. tracks at the right have been relocated from their original position along the bank of the Potomac, and prior to 1896, because the Roman Catholic Church in the center has not yet been remodeled.

At the right High Street comes down the hill to form a junction with Shenandoah Street. On the left side of the street at the corner and fronting on Shenandoah is visible a large 2 ½ story brick house that was located on the corner Lot No. 51. Moving up the hill, there is visible a small portion of the gable roof of Bldg. No. 37, located on Wager Lot. 52. Above this can be seen the tall three story building standing on Lot 53A.

This is the structure that was erected by Samuel M. Williams about 1850. Note that the second and third stories of the east end wall have no windows. Just above the top of Lot 53A building can be seen the gable roof with one dormer centered in the front of the house that Richard D. Doran erected on Lot 54B about 1843.

At the time this photograph was taken, the house on Lot 53A was owned by William Exum, a tinsmith, who had his shop and his residence located in this building.

Most of the house on Lot 53A and all of the structure on Lot 54B were apparently demolished by William B. Nichols in the period 1896-1907 in order to construct Park Bldg. No. 3. Compare this view with photo HF-96, taken in the period 1896-1901.



PHOTO NO. 6

Harper's Ferry From Maryland Heights 1896-1900

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 96

This photograph was taken after 1896, because the remodeling of the Catholic Church is underway in the view, and prior to 1901, because the mid-19th century stone and brick structures located on Wager Lots 3A and 54B, the future (1902) site of Park Building No. 3, are still standing in this picture.

The low pitched shed roof on William Exum's house on Lot 53A is still visible. Compare with Photo HF-99, taken in the period 1892 to 1896.



PHOTO NO. 7

High Street, Harper's Ferry, W. Va

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. 142

This view was probably made in the period 1902-1907, just after Bldg. No. 3 had been completed. (Compare Photo HF-378 - taken during World War I, in this latter view there is a good sized tree growing in front of Bldg. No. 3 that is not visible in HF-142.)

Buildings on the Left, from left to right: The large two and one half story brick house is located on Lot 51 and was erected in 1832; next moving up the hill, a small portion of Bldg. No. 37. The one story frame structures are located on Wager Lot 53B. The 1907 insurance map indicates that this edifice was then being used as meat market. Just above this rises the brand new bldg. No. 3, which was constructed by William B. Nichols in the period 1896 to 1907.

Notice that there are no windows located in the second story level of the east end wall, thus indicating that the existing second story windows are a later addition.



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

PHOTO NO. 8

High Street, Harpers Ferry, W. Va. During World War I

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. HF - 378

The troops marching down High Street indicate that this Photograph was taken during World War I, 1917-18 and prior to 1921, when the large two and one-half story brick structure visible at the left, and located on Wager Lot No. 51 at the corner of High and Shenandoah Streets was demolished.

Not the fact there are no windows in the second floor level of the east end wall. The large tree growing in front of Bldg. 3 is not visible in HF-142, thus indicating that HF-142 must have been taken some 14 Or 15 years earlier.

Photo HF-378 also shows that Bldg. No. 3 was not remodeled so as to include windows and a door in its east wall at the second floor level until after World War I.

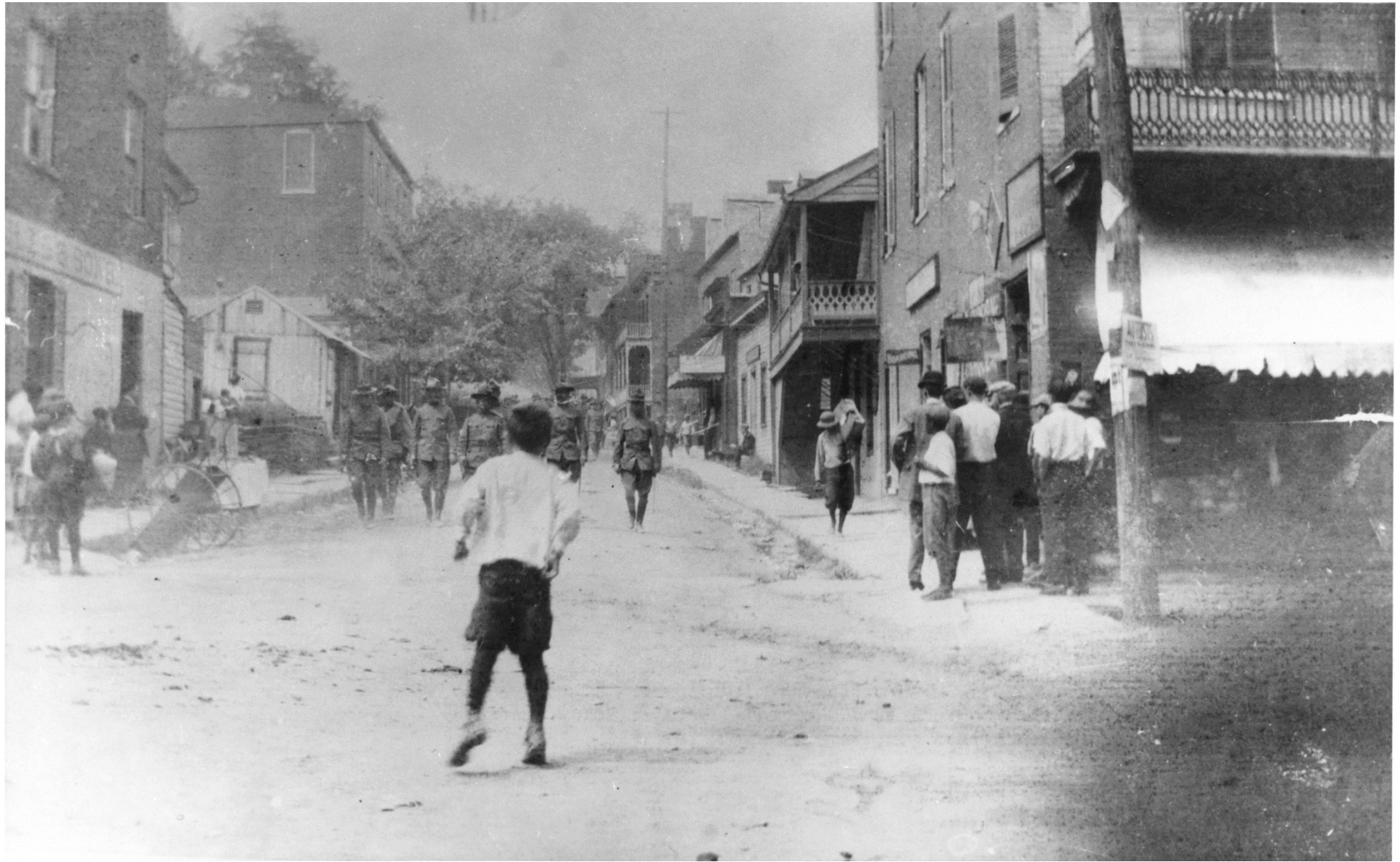


PHOTO NO. 9

Bldg. No. 3 - The Williams/Nichols Building January 1955

Harpers Ferry NHP Negative No. NHF - 173

The east side and front (north) elevation of Bldg. No. 3 prior to any work by the National Park Service. The small two-story frame building at the right is Bldg. No. 2, a post Civil War structure. For a view of the west elevation of Bldgs. 2 and 3, taken in January 1955, see Negative No. NHF - 674.

