

PKG. 119

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

HISTORY SECTION

PARK BUILDING 44

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Note on references . . .

The following terms apply throughout the report:

_____ Census	refers to Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census records for 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920, as well as certain special Censuses (such as Slave and Manufacturing); almost all referenced material is available on microfilm at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park; some data is only accessible in hardcopy or through the History Database
HFD..	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Document No. . . documents, manuscripts, maps, etc. in HAFE Library
HAFE	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
HF-_____	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Photograph Collection numbers
JCC	precedes references to records at the Jefferson County Courthouse, Charles Town, West Virginia
NA RG	National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, D.C., Record Group . . .
Reel ____, Vol. ____	refers to binders in HAFE library of National Archives material photocopied from microfilm
Building Numbers	<u>Park Building</u> _____ indicates current HAFE identification <u>H</u> & <u>AD</u> are prefixes from the park's 1859 base map; <u>H</u> signifies "Dwelling House" <u>AD</u> signifies "Armory Dwelling"
WL	Wager Lot; refers to lot numbers in 1835 property division of Wager Reservation

PREFACE

Reports by former Supervisory Park Historian Charles W. Snell in 1957 and by former Park Architect Archie W. Franzen in 1962 provide the basis for the current study. Architect Franzen's interpretation of physical evidence refuted Historian Snell's 1957 premise that Building 44 was erected before 1840. Snell, in his 1973 report on Harpers Ferry business enterprises, endorsed Franzen's position. The current study finds no reason to dispute Architect Franzen's conclusion that Philip Coons built the structure in 1844-1845 when Dr. Nicholas Marmion was erecting contiguous Building 43.¹

As with most local structures, developing Park Building 44's quite straightforward physical history contrasts sharply with the difficulty in identifying occupants. Determining occupation is complicated by the fact that, from early in the nineteenth century until well into the twentieth century--even during the forty-year period when the Wager family held a monopoly on privately-owned land--there was (to borrow Snell's phrasing) a game of "musical mercantile chairs" played in Harper's Ferry. The intensity of the game increased with the end of the Wager family monopoly in the 1830s because merchants, when leases expired, were then free to negotiate terms,

¹ Charles W. Snell (Historian, Park Supervisory), "HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT PART I for Building No. 44, The Richards Building, "Harpers Ferry National Monument (October 14, 1857).

Charles W. Snell, "The Business Enterprises and Commercial Development of Harpers Ferry's Lower Town Area, 1803 - 1861" April 9, 1973, p. 102.

Archie W. Franzen (Architect), "HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT PART I ON THE PHILP COONS BUILDING SOMETIMES CALLED THE MASONIC HALL BUILDING (Building "44)," Harpers Ferry National Monument, Architectural Data Section (October 1962).

either with the new owner of their present location or with owners of other buildings in the lower town business district. Merchants who remained in business at Harpers Ferry for a number of years thus often occupied several different "stands."²

Other factors hampering efforts to link occupants to buildings include:

- lack of numbers in street addresses;
- inconsistency in street names or references ("Market Street" was also known as "Globe Inn Alley," "Water Street," and "Loudoun Street;" Shenandoah Street appeared as "Canal Street" and "Potomac Street," among others);
- duplicate meanings for geographic references--for example, "Market Square," depending on the decades, connoted sites on the west or east end of Lower Town, or referred to the entire Shenandoah Street business area;
- interpretation of 19th century terms ("the house presently occupied by Mrs. Stephenson" did not necessarily mean the structure was her domicile); the terms "opposite" and "nearly opposite," often used in advertising, were vexingly inexact;
- frequent changes in store or business sites or names;

² Charles W. Snell, "HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT, The Edward Tearney Buildings-Bldg. No. 38 and 39 on Wager Lot No. 50," Historical Data, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia, October 1979, p. 21. Transcribed in: Patricia Chickering, "HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT, HISTORY SECTION, BUILDINGS 38 AND 39: THE EDWARD TEARNEY BUILDINGS, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, National Park Service/University of Maryland Cooperative Agreement, Historical Research Project, December 1994, Appendix D.

- duplication of business names; over the years several businesses, for example, called themselves the "Baltimore Clothing House";
- colloquial appellations which require intimate contemporary knowledge of the community to decipher; and
- ambiguous, obscure language in nineteenth-century news accounts, editorials and advertising.

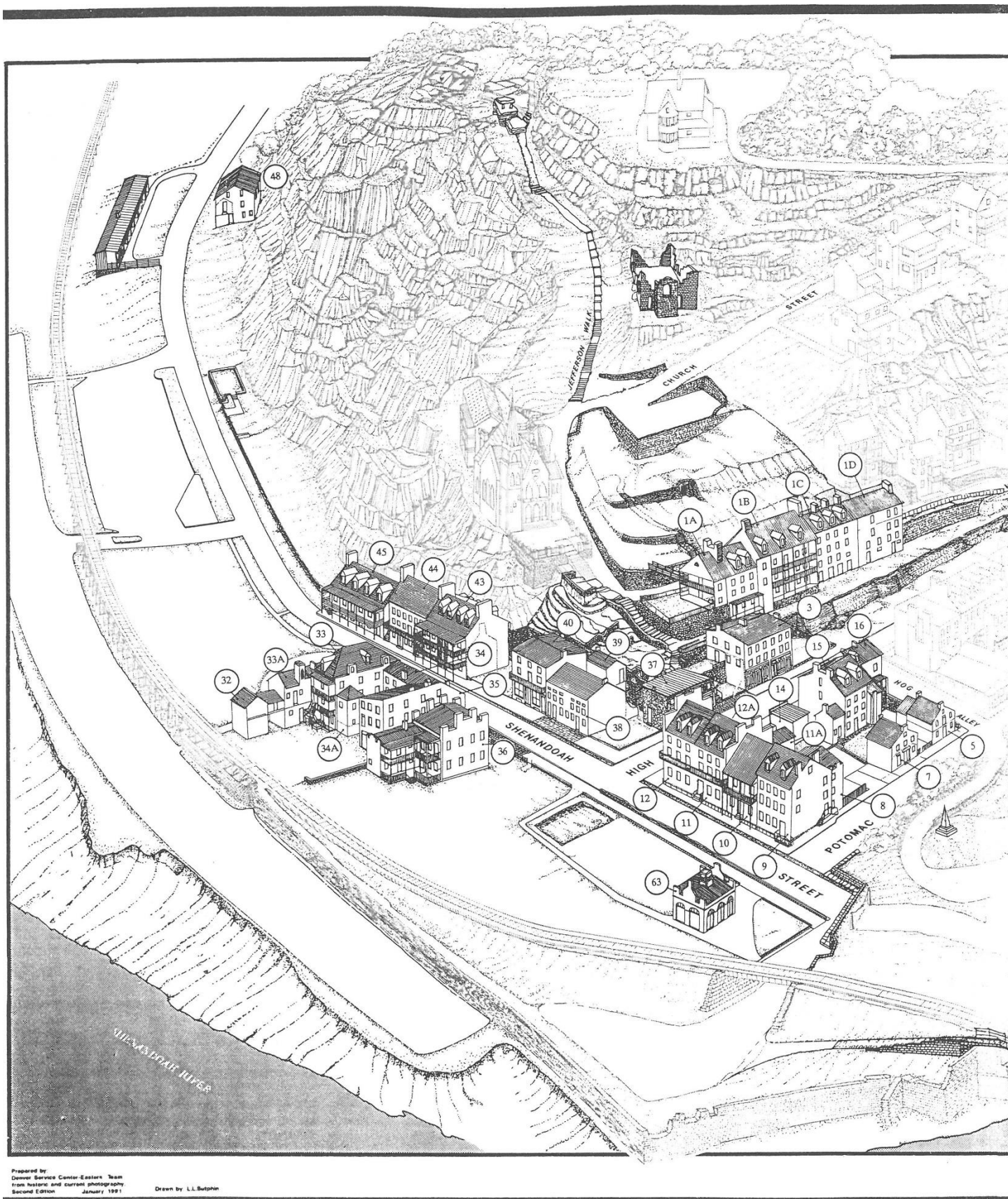
For all these reasons this report presents fewer occupation scenarios for Building 44 than earlier works developed.

Data generated by the landmark history database project at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park contributed significantly to this update of the work of Snell and Franzen. Begun in 1989, the database has evolved into an invaluable research tool. Historians working under a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the University of Maryland have combined research skills and data entry expertise with the latest in computer technology and technique to develop the database and utilize its contents in updating history sections of Historical Structures Reports. The database is also accessible in various park offices and the park library, thus serving a broad spectrum of users--among them park interpreters, exhibit designers, archeologists, landscape architects, scholars, citizens seeking ancestral data, and, of course, historians writing reports.

From the beginning historians have received unqualified support from National Park Service professionals. Park Superintendent Donald

Campbell endorsed the project from the beginning. Regional Historical Architect Rebecca Stevens lent her vision to the project's inception and continually provided administrative support. Park Cultural Resources Chief Dennis E. Frye has provided guidance, sustenance and encouragement. Thanks to their dedication, the database continues to develop, with new information sources emerging and known resources expanding.

Figure I: Lower Town Buildings



Prepared by
General Services Center-Eastern Team
from historic and current photography
Second Edition January 1991

Drawn by L.L. Bishop

BUILDING 44 TIMELINE (see text for references)

Park Building 44 stands on Wager Lot (hereinafter WL) 46, which fronts about 38 feet on the north side of Shenandoah Street, running back about 70 feet to the cliff

1796 Wager Lot 46 was among property held back by John Wager, Sr., when he sold his late wife's share of Robert Harper's lands to the U. S. Government for establishment of the Armory

1835 Court-appointed commissioners assigned vacant Shenandoah Street Wager Lot 46 (among others) to James B. Wager in the division of the Wager Property among three heirs

1836 (June) Commissioners sold much of James B. Wager's assigned property; WL 46, advertised as "vacant," was probably among lots sold, as subsequent sale advertisements did not list that lot; the deed, dated January 1, 1840, showed James Duncanson and Philip Coons as purchasers for the sum of \$600

1840 (January) James Duncanson put "two houses and lots . . . which two lots are marked and numbered on the plat of said [Wager] estate as Nos. 53 and 46]" into trust

This may mean there was one house on each lot, or there could have been two houses on one of the lots; if there was a structure on WL 46 at that time, it was not Building 44 but a predecessor, erected after 1836 for Duncanson's half of the lot. Suggesting the lot held no significant structure

1842 (November) Trustee sold Duncanson's half to Philip Coons for \$100; thus Coons came to possess entire lot

1844/1845 Philip Coons erected Building 44 concurrently with construction of Building 43 (on adjacent WL 47) whose southwest wall provides the northeast closure for Park Building 44 (in December 1845 Park Building 43 was advertised as "Dr. Marmion's new building"); first floor of Park Building 44 contained space for two stores; second floor was arranged as a dwelling.

Construction was far enough along by March 1845 that the Masons began to "build" (see below, quotation from November 1852 deed) Park Building 44's third floor as their Hall; likely what they did was finish the third

floor of the Building for their needs and at their expense.

News accounts and records of Charity Lodge 111 reveal construction of the third floor meeting room began in early 1845; it was likely completed by November 22, 1846, when the Masons held their first meeting in the new room; the Hall was dedicated in early 1846

1847 (November)

Philip Coons Offered WL 46 and "large and elegant three-story Store-House thereon" for sale; stated two store rooms on first floor were occupied by clothing store and saddle manufactory

1848 (April)

First positive identification of a tenant for store part of Park Building 44; D. Conrad advertised opening new dry goods store "on Shenandoah Street in the room recently occupied by the Jews, under the Masonic Hall"

1852 (November)

Philip and Annie C. Coons granted the Masons the right to "build as a meeting place or lodge of the said Fraternity an addition or third story upon the stone house built by the said Coons on the West side of Shenandoah Street in said town on Lot No. 46"; the deed stipulated the Masons would maintain the building's roof and spouting, and guaranteed all parties access to the stairway on the southwest side of the building; there is little significance in the seven-year discrepancy between the deed date and the Mason's construction date (1852 and 1845, respectively) as it was common practice in the mid-nineteenth century to record deeds long after the transaction.

1845 (March)

Philip Coons advertised Park Building 44 (2 store rooms on first floor, 5 rooms in dwelling above, offered separately) for sale or rent stating structure was occupied by Thomas Russell, Jr.

1855 (June)

Philip Coons sold WL 46 with Park Building 44 to William Richards for \$1,830

1859 (September)

William Richards advertised the store room formerly occupied by Mr. Newton for rent "Desirable for grocery store. Apply at bread bakery, Shenandoah St."; at the time Richards also owned Park Building 40, but I had only one shop, a clothing store; therefore the

advertisement refers to Park Building 44; "bread bakery" perhaps utilized a small room (12' by 11') to the rear of the southwest store in Building 44; masonry crosswalks running from the building to the rock hillside formed the room; a low stone foundation (6' by 5') in that space may have been a vault or oven enclosure; if the bread bakery thus was in the southwest store, "Mr. Newton" would have occupied the northeast store

1860 (October) William Richards advertised "Rare chance - the only chance to rent a STORE ROOM at Harpers-Ferry is now presented. The room adjoining the Bakery on Shenandoah Street is offered for rent."

1861 William Richards left Harpers Ferry at some time after the 1860 Census and took up residence in Georgia, where he remained for the rest of his life

1864, 5 During the last years of the Civil War the store part of Park Building 44 (the Masons evidently retained occupancy of their Hall) was occupied as follows:

February 1864 Store by Philip Saunter
troops on second floor
Masonic Hall above

March 1864 Truman W. Potterfield
Charles H. Trail

May 1864 Truman W. Potterfield
Charles H. Trail (Trail was
repairing the "upper part and want
the use of it for a time as an offset
to cost")

June 1864 Truman W. Potterfield
Charles H. Trail

August 1864 to
January 1865 Truman W. Potterfield
Charles H. Trail

March 1865 to
July 1865 "dwelling & store" by Trail
"store rooms" by Leisenring & Son

January,
February 1866 Correspondence indicates Trail had
moved out on December 1, 1865, and
his portion of the building was

occupied as a hospital on order of the Harpers Ferry Post Commander; S.V. Yantis as Richards' agent signed receipt for property from Bureau of Refugees, Freeman, and Abandoned Lands; dispute over possession arose between the Bureau and the Post Commander; not known when Yantis actually achieved possession of the store and dwelling portion;
Store lease expired January 31, 1866; it is presumed Leisenring continued occupying it

- 1867 Gidion and George W. Leisenring "partners trading under the name and style of Leisenring and Son at Harpers Ferry" executed Deed of Trust to William H. Travers and Benjamin F. Leisenring conveying the property and effects of the partnership consisting of the stock of goods, wares, merchandise and store or warehouse occupied by the said Leisenring & Son in the Masonic Building on Shenandoah St. at Harpers Ferry."
- 1872 (March) Public sale of William Richards' property advertised; included "substantially built: stone building "long and well-established business house" fronting 38 feet on west side of Shenandoah Street with storeroom & warehouse occupied on first floor by Mr. B. F. Leisenring merchant who was doing "splendid business;" above store was 5 room dwelling; back building with 3 rooms; Masonic Lodge on third floor; store Warehouse & dwelling under rent at \$258.
Note: it is not known when the Leisenring firm left Park Building 44
- (April) William Richards conveyed "stone dwelling Free Mason Lodge" (with exception of the entrance way to the Free Mason Lodge) to Murtha Walsh.
- 1877 Masonic records indicate they fixed pavement in front of building in connection with repairing exterior stairway
- 1888 Photo HF-82, 1889 flood, shows front of park Building, window of left by shuttered
- 1890s Photo HF-46 shows sign "J. F. Cassell Bro . . . Roofing Stoves . . ." hanging perpendicular to middle

of building from pipe extending from iron balcony on second floor; pipe was visible in HF 82, but no sign was attached

1892 (April) James C. Walsh granted Julia Walsh 1/9 interest as heir of Murtha Walsh in "Lot 46 . . . known as the stone house property"

1894 Sanborn shows "dwelling"

1902 Sanborn shows "dwelling"

1907 Sanborn shows "plumber & tin shop" in northeast store, "dwelling" in southwest

1910 William Clevenger finished the façade of "Walsh's" property occupied by Fry & Koontz (butchers) in stucco; this likely referred to Park Building 44; Fry & Koontz traditionally had butcher shops on the north side of Shenandoah St.; sometime thereafter Fry & Koontz moved next door to Park Building 43

1912 Sanborn shows "plumber--tinsmith" in northeast store, "dwelling" in southwest

1916 Julia Walsh bequeathed WL 46 to nine Walsh heirs

1916-1917 C.M. "Buck" Larue moved back and forth across Shenandoah Street; he purchased building on C1 in 1916, likely moved to it as dwelling; sold that to C. W. Demory in 1917 & moved "back" across street to "property opposite" [that which] the family had vacated earlier; Mrs. Rosalie Larue Lloyd, Buck's daughter (interviewed in December 1993), stated her father had his shoe repair shop in the southwest store of Park Building 44 & he later added a grocery in the northeast store; the family lived on the second floor

1918 (April) Buck Larue rented a store room adjoining his residence (likely the 'other' Park Building 44 ground-floor store); Mr. Harroll who had occupied it as a clock & watch repair shop moved a door above (to the southwest bay of Park Building 43) (interviews with Mrs. Lloyd and Isabel Flanagan confirmed this scenario)

(June) News item stated Buck Larue opened a delicatessen shop in conjunction with his shoe repairing enterprise

1919 Buck Larue enlarged "tobacco & confectionary" store & went into general grocery business; Ms. Pearl Larue

who had been with W. & E. Doran began clerking for her father; Buck Larue bought a quantity of merchandise from selling-off of W. & M.E. Doran Dept. Store

- 1920 Buck Larue went out of shoe repair business as general grocery was so expanded it took all his time [this may be erroneous as Mrs. Lloyd stated her father always kept a shoe repair business while in HF]
- 1921 Buck Larue had music at his store in evenings; himself on basshorn, son on mandolin & Messrs. Harrell & Roderick on guitar (note: Mrs. Lloyd stated family was very musical; one brother was with Sousa's band)
- 1922 Sanborn shows "store" in northeast, "dwelling" in southwest
- 1923 (Jan.) Larue family still resided on Shenandoah Street
- (March) Larue family removed to house vacated by Earle Kronk (High Street)
- 1933 Sanborn shows "store" in both sides of building
- 1952 Walsh heirs and Masons deeded WL 46 to State of West Virginia

I. PARK BUILDING 44: PHYSICAL HISTORY

Wager Lot (hereinafter WL) 46, site of Park Building 44, was Wager family property from 1782 to 1836. It was part of the "Wager Reservation," over six acres of land in lower town Harpers Ferry retained by John Wager, Sr., in 1796 when he sold the U. S. Government most of the property his late wife Sarah had inherited in 1782 from her uncle, Robert Harper. Legal action in 1835 during the bankruptcy of his grandson, James B. Wager, compelled the distribution of the "Wager Reservation" among Wager heirs, and court-appointed Special Commissioners laid off the property into 56 lots, assigning equal shares to the three inheritors.³

The Special Commissioners advertised for public sale, on June 18, 1836, all property assigned to James B. Wager. Philip Coons and James Duncanson purchased WL 46, described as a vacant lot fronting 38½ feet on Shenandoah Street, running back 70 feet.⁴

WL 46 was therefore vacant when Coons and Duncanson bought it, perhaps because encroachment of the cliff face severely limited

³ Snell, Historic Building Report, Building No. 44, 1957, p. 1; Charles W. Snell, "THE ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC LANDS OF THE U.S. ARMORY AT HARPER'S FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA 1796-1885, Volume I, A Narrative History," Denver Service Center, National Capital Team, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Denver, Colorado (December 1979), p. 1.

⁴ Virginia Free Press, March 24, 1836, p3c5, June 2, 1836 p3c5; September 22, 1836, p3c5; April 6, 1837, p3c3. The September 1836 and April 1837 advertisements detailed lots remaining unsold from the June 1836 sale. Although WL 46 as described in the March 1836 advertisement was not among them, WL 48, 40 by 100 feet was listed, perhaps in error, as WL 48 was part of Noah H. Swayne's share. Therefore, although no record of the 1836 sale to Coons and Duncanson has been found, it can be deduced the lot sold at the first or second 1836 sale, and as a deed to the property recorded in 1840 (JCC Deed Book 24, p. 214) grants the lot to Coons and Duncanson, they were likely the buyers.

construction space thereon. Architect Franzen stated large quantities of "natural rock" had to be removed to provide level space for a structure--rock later used in Park Building 44's walls, which were finished on the exterior with "rough casting."⁵

It is possible, however, a structure preceded Park Building 44 on WL 46. On January 10, 1840, James Duncanson (who, with Philip Coons, had purchased both WL 46 and WL 53) put into trust to Philip Coons and George W. Sappington:

two houses and lots . . . which two lots are marked and numbered on the plat of said [Wager] estate as Nos. 53 and 46, the one being situated on the south side of the street leading from Harpers Ferry to Charles Town [High Street], and opposite the lot owned by W. & S. B. Anderson [WL 15S4, site of present Park Building 15] - The other [WL 46] on Potowmac [Shenandoah] Street adjoining the U. States line on the south, near the house now occupied by Henry Ward.

This deed suggests two possibilities: either that two houses stood on one lot (WL53 or 46), or that each lot held one house. The true meaning will probably never be known.⁶

Trustee George Sappington advertised Duncanson's share of the property for sale in 1842, and on November 12 that year Philip Coons bought "one undivided half" of the lot, consolidating his title to WL 46. Charles Snell stated Coons paid \$100 for Duncanson's half of

⁵ Franzen, "The Philip Coons Building," p. 1.

⁶ JCC, Deed Book 24, pp. 94, 95. Henry Ward was occupant of record in park Building 45 at the time (Charles W. Snell, "A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOG AND DIRECTORY OF 187 ARMORY DWELLING HOUSES, 1841-1852, OF THE U. S. ARMORY AT HARPER'S FERRY, VIRGINIA, Including Rents Collected, 1823 to 1851," "A History of Armory Dwelling Houses, Volume II," Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia, Denver Service Center, National Capital Team, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Denver, Colorado, September 1981, p. 24).

the lot, a low purchase price which suggested the lot was vacant.⁷

As erected in 1844/45, Park Building 44 had space for two stores on the ground floor and a dwelling on the second floor. Charity Lodge #111 built their Masonic Hall on the third floor. Former park Architect Franzen cited two principal facts in establishing that construction of Park Building 44 began in 1844 or 1845:

- The building uses the southwest end of Park Building 43 (a newly-completed building in 1845) as its northeast closure, and
- minutes of Masonic Charity Lodge #111 show construction of the third floor hall began early in 1845 and was completed by November 1845 when the Masons held their first meeting in their new quarters.⁸

Philip Coons, WL 46 owner, was a prominent Harpers Ferry Mason for many years. By deed recorded in November 1852 Philip and Anne C. Coons formally (and, of course, after the fact) granted the trustees of Charity Lodge #111 the right to "build as a meeting place or lodge of the said Fraternity an addition or third story upon the

⁷ Virginia Free Press, September 29, 1842, p3c3. The sale, originally advertised for October 22, 1842, was postponed once and held on November 12, 1842; JCC,

Deed Book 27, p. 61;

Snell, Building 44, p. 2.

⁸ Franzen, "The Philip Coons Building," p. 2. Charles W. Snell couched the 1845 construction date for adjoining Building 43 in an advertisement (Virginia Free Press, December 25, 1845, p3c4) for a new store in the "House recently erected by Dr. Marmion, on SHENANDOAH STREET, a few doors west of the Pay Office, opposite side." Snell believed Dr. Marmion owned half of Wager Lot 47 (site of Building 43), which fitted that description. Minutes of March 22, 1845, show Philip Coons bought and salvaged brick, iron, and lumber from the Masonic Hall in the Episcopal Church which had burned down. Architect Franzen believed some of the material could have been used in building the new hall as the rear wall above the third floor level is brick and the floor boards are narrower than those of the second floor.

stone house built by the said Coons on the West side of Shenandoah Street in said town on Lot No. 46." Several subsequent deeds referred to Park Building 44 as "Stone Dwelling Free Mason Lodge" or the "Masonic Building."⁹

Former Park Architect Franzen determined that Park Building 44 was designed to house two stores at street level; the second floor was "partitioned off" to provide living accommodations for one of the storekeepers and family; the third floor was finished by the Masons for their use. An exterior stairway on the southwest wall provided access to the second floor living area and the third floor Masonic Hall (originally the building had no interior stairway). Later an inside staircase toward the rear of the southwest store, abutting the central brick dividing wall, led to the second floor.¹⁰

Old boat timbers salvaged from Shenandoah River freight "gundalows" are a unique extant feature in the third floor Masonic Hall. The timbers originally supported a vaulted, elliptical plaster ceiling hung beneath the building's roof trusses and rafters. Newspaper accounts and recent investigation affirm the local tradition that some Harpers Ferry buildings contain boat wood. Timbers were salvaged from wooden boats ("gundalows" or "batteaus") that carried cargo down rivers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As on some rivers, including the Shenandoah, the return

⁹ JCC, Deed Book 33, p. 43; Deed Book 35, p. 9; Deed Book 2, p. 37. By November 1872 "Logan Lodge #25" succeeded "Charity Lodge #111," which had remained loyal to the Grand Lodge of Virginia ("A History of Logan Lodge No. 25 A.F. & A.M." provided by Bob Spencer of Harpers Ferry, 1993, p. 3).

¹⁰ Franzen, Building 43, pp. 1-9.

journey upstream was impractical, the boats were broken up at the downstream terminus and the wood sold. On the Shenandoah River, gundalows regularly made the trip from Port Republic (at the confluence of the north and south branches of river, and regarded as the highest point from which navigation was possible) to Harpers Ferry.¹¹

Philip Coons owned Park Building 44 for the ensuing ten years, renting it to various merchants. Although the Masons occupied the third floor beginning in 1845, it was not until November 1852 that Philip and Anne C. Coons deeded that floor to Charity Lodge #111. Coons advertised the first and second floors for sale in March 1854. A deed of bargain and sale shows Philip and Anne C. Coons sold the building to William Richards in July 1855.¹²

William Richards held the structure until 1972, when he sold it to local entrepreneur Murtha Walsh. Walsh heirs granted the property to the State of West Virginia in December 1952. A month earlier the

¹¹ Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, June 18, 1840, p2c5;

Spirit of Jefferson, February 19, 1867, p2c4;

Anthony Greiner, "Navigation and Commerce on the Shenandoah River of Virginia," The Tiller, Virginia Canals & Navigations Society, Inc., Vol. 14, Issue 1, Spring 1993. Pp. cover, 10-13;

Bill Trout, unpublished draft manuscript, "A Report on the Gundalow Wood Found in the Masonic Hall, Building #44 in Harper's [sic] Ferry National Historical Park," August 31, 1993, on file at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Bill Trout (President, American Canal Society) and Historian Michael A. Jenkins investigated the Masonic Hall on August 11 and 12, 1993, and found ceiling beams clearly of gundalow wood. Mr. Trout's manuscript postulates that the vaulted ceiling was added after the building was completed, citing the "handsomely finished" roof trusses (not of gundalow wood) above the Masonic Hall ceiling.

¹² JCC, Deed Book 33, p. 43; Deed Book 32, p. 373; Philip Coons perhaps deferred deeding the property to the Masons until he began planning to sell the rest of the building.

Virginia Free Press, March 9, 1854, p3c2;

JCC, Deed Book 35, p. 9.

trustees of Logan Lodge #25 had quit-claimed to the State of West Virginia their right to the building's third floor and the alleyway and stairway on the south side of the building.¹³

In summary, Philip Coons erected Park Building 44, beginning probably in late 1844 and completing it at the latest by November 1845. If another building occupied WL 46 between 1836 and 1844, it was demolished to make way for Park Building 44. The new structure served three purposes: ground floor stores, second floor dwelling, and third floor Masonic Hall. William Richards owned it from 1855 until he sold it to Murtha Walsh in 1872, and the Walsh family held it until they sold the building to the State of West Virginia for inclusion in Harpers Ferry National Monument in 1952. The third floor remained the Masonic Hall until 1952 when it, too, was granted to the State of West Virginia for inclusion in Harpers Ferry National Monument.

II. Occupancy

1845 to the Civil War

In his 1957 report Charles W. Snell developed an occupancy chain for Park Building 44 based on the premise that Duncanson and Coons had erected it in 1838. That Park Building 44 was erected in 1845 concurrent with Park Building 43 does not, of course, preclude the existence of another structure on WL 46 between 1836 and 1845. Logic dictates, however, that it is unlikely Duncanson and Coons erected a

¹³ JCC, Deed Book 7, p. 198; Deed Book 191, p. 45; Deed Book 190, p. 287.

substantial building, only to tear it down a few years later.

Snell believe two merchants, Alfred Hite and William J. Stephens occupied a building on WL 46 in 1838 and 1839, and stated that Stephens was there until 1842. He cited advertising by both merchants which defined their location as opposite the Post Office (in 1838 the Post Office was on Lot C1, across Shenandoah Street from Park Buildings 45 and 44). However, Stephens' description could easily apply to Park Building 45, and a Government rent roll for Park Building 45 reveals Stephens in March 1841 owed one quarter's rent of \$31.25. A June 1839 advertisement located his store opposite the post office and adjoining Hite's feed store. Thus Stephens and Hite occupied adjoining premises in one structure--much more likely substantial Park Building 45, which by then had three commercial spaces on its ground floor, than a building erected on WL 46 which was razed a few years later. Further supporting the thesis that Stephens was in Park Building 45 all along is his advertisement in January 1840 giving his location as "next door [emphasis ours] to the Post Office, Shenandoah." The post office had moved to Park Building 45 by that date. No other tenant has been identified with Park Building 45 in the period Hite and Stephens likely occupied it, further supporting the hypothesis they were in Park Building 45, not Park Building 44's possible predecessor on WL 46.¹⁴

The first clue to Park Building 44 use appears in a November

¹⁴ Virginia Free Press, March 7, 1839, p3c3;
Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, June 5, 1839, p3c6&7; January 8, 1840, p3c7.

1847 advertisement wherein Philip Coons offered two properties, one of which was WL46, for sale. He stated a clothing store and a saddle manufactory occupied the first floor store rooms, the second floor was a dwelling, and he reserved the third floor Masonic Lodge from the sale. In an April 1848 advertisement D. Conrad announced the opening of a new store on Shenandoah Street "In the room recently occupied by the Jews, under the Masonic Hall," stating he had upwards of "30 years experience in the business." Alas, the phrase "the Jews" is imprecise (but in the context of the time not pejorative) and no other such mention was found. Neither has any other mention of "D. Conrad" emerged in connection with a Harpers Ferry store. "F. J." Conrad was, however, very prominent in Harpers Ferry advertising, beginning in 1847 and continuing through the 1850s, and for part of that time he was probably in either Park Building 43 or Park Building 44. F. J. Conrad advertised in March 1848 he was selling fresh fish for Joseph Dowling of Georgetown, D. C., and was located on Shenandoah Street opposite the Market House. That description fitted both Bldgs. 43 and 44.¹⁵

No connection has been established between D. and F. J. Conrad, but considering their respective ages in census listing they may have been father and son. D. Conrad did not appear in the local census for 1850, which showed Fayette J. Conrad (25) heading a six-person

¹⁵ Spirit of Jefferson, November 12, 1847, p3c4;
Virginia Free Press, April 8, 1848, p3c1;
Spirit of Jefferson, May 28, 1847, p1c1;
Virginia Free Press, March 25, 1848, p3c5; April 8, 1848, p3c2.

household, but in 1860 David Conrad (68) and Sarah Conrad (65) were in the eleven-person household of Fayette J. Conrad.¹⁶

Sometime after May 1848 F. J. Conrad moved from his location opposite the Market House (either Park Building 43 or 44), as in January 1851 James A. Beckham advertised a store room "recently occupied" by P. O. Littlejohn and adjoining the store of F. C. [sic] Conrad for rent. P. O. Littlejohn conducted a store on WL 11 (just south of the Armory, at the east end of Shenandoah Street) beginning in January 1848, and again leased the store in 1851 and 1852.¹⁷

Likewise, few clues to occupants of the second floor dwelling have emerged. Charles Snell postulated Thomas Russell, Jr., occupied a ground-floor store room during 1853-54, based on an advertisement Philip Coons placed in March 1854:

For Sale or Rent

I will sell on SATURDAY, the 18th day of the present month, at 12 o'clock, on the premises, my LARGE STONE STOREHOUSE & DWELLING, situated on Shenandoah street, and now occupied by Thomas Russell, Jr. The two store Rooms on the first floor will be sold separate, and the Dwelling above consisting of five rooms also . . .

If not sold the whole will be divided as above and rented for one year from the 1st of April.

PHILIP COONS

Harpers-Ferry, March 9, 1854.¹⁸

There may be confusion among several local Russell families. The Thomas Russell who occupied part of Park Building 44 in the 1850s was one of several Russells in Harpers ferry at the time. In local

¹⁶ Seventh Census, 1850, p. 410 of Harpers Ferry;
Eighth Census, 1860, pp. 196&197 of Harpers Ferry.

¹⁷ Virginia Free Press, January 5, 1848, p1c4; January 24, 1851, p3c2;
March 11, 1852, p3c4.

¹⁸ Ibid, March 9, 1854, p3c2.

business terms the name Russell more commonly identified two prominent merchants, brothers Joseph and Israel Russell, but no evidence connecting them with Park Building 44 has emerged. Thomas Russell, Jr., was an armorer, as was his father Thomas Russell, Sr., both born in England. Local censuses from 1820 to 1860 listed both men and where the census includes occupations, both appeared as armory workers. In 1850 and 1860 Thomas Russell, Jr., appeared on the Bolivar census, and the 1850 census listed Thomas Russell, Sr., in Harpers Ferry. In 1860 Thomas Russell, Sr., appeared in the Bolivar household of Thomas Russell, Jr.¹⁹

Both Thomas Russells rented Armory housing during the 1840s. Thomas Russell Sr. rented a stone house on Block AA, North Cliff (or Potomac) Street between Washington Street and the Musket Factory. The house was demolished in 1850. In 1841 Thomas Jr. rented a brick house on Block BB, Washington Street, Camp Hill, and in 1844 and 1846 he rented a wood house on Block AA, Lot 3, which was demolished between 1855 and 1859.²⁰

An 1858-1860 Bolivar tax ledge listed Thomas Russell, Jr., with real estate worth \$800 and \$700, in 1859 and 1860 respectively, only the 1860 ledger included Thomas Russell, Sr., and it contains no real

¹⁹ Reel 245, Fourth Census (1820), p. 537 of Harpers Ferry;
Reel 246, Fifth Census (1830), p. 170 of Harpers Ferry;
Reel 247, Sixth Census (1840), p. 242 of Harpers Ferry;
Reel 248, Seventh Census (1850), p. 406 of Harpers Ferry; p. 392B of Bolivar;

Reel 250, Eighth Census (1860), p. 237 of Bolivar

²⁰ Snell, "A Descriptive Catalog," pp. 91, 100, 120. Thomas Russell, Jr., was succeeded in the Block AA house by James Russell. No relationship between the two has been established.

estate levy. Philip Coons' 1854 reference to Thomas Russell, Jr., may therefore have signified that Russell conducted a store in Park Building 44, or perhaps, despite census evidence placing him in Bolivar, he lived on the second floor.²¹

William Richards bought Park Building 44 in 1855. His first recorded tenant, likely occupying the northeast premises, was the Newton and Potterfield grocery and butchering firm which dissolved in 1858. Architectural evidence that a bake oven existed in the rear of the southwest store and advertisements William Richards placed in 1859 and 1860 suggest a bakery operated there. In August 1859 Richards offered to supply bread and cakes to participants in a camp meeting near Harpers Ferry, and, a month later, when he advertised premises formerly occupied by Mr. Newton, he suggested applying to the "bread bakery" on Shenandoah Street. In March 1860 Richards again advertised the storeroom for rent, stating it adjoined the bakery on Shenandoah Street. Although bakeries had been associated with other locations, Park Building 44 was the only Shenandoah Street Property William Richards owned which accommodated two businesses.²²

No information has been found on who operated the bakery in the

²¹ Reel 254, George Koonce, "Ledger as Collector of Bolivar Corporation Tax, 1858-1860 (Including also accounts of George W. Cox as Collector)," Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, Part of the Koonce Family Papers, L-6540, Perkins Library, Manuscript Collection, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, pp. 47, 12.

²² Virginia Free Press, March 25, 1858, p3c1; Franzen, "The Philip Coons Building," p. 9; Virginia Free Press, August 4, 1859, p3c1; September 1, 1859, p2c6; October 18, 1860, p3c1. Richards also owned WL 49, Bldg. 40 (not a duplex, and with only one store), which at the time housed a clothing store (JCC, Deed Book 31, p. 109, William and Amelia Chambers to William Richards, February 15, 1850).

late 1850s, but Charles Snell postulated that John N. Stonebraker, listed in the 1860 census as a confectioner, occupied both the bakery and the dwelling above.²³

John Stonebraker may still have occupied the bakery when William Richards advertised the adjoining storeroom for rent in October 1860:

A RARE CHANCE

The only chance to rent a STORE ROOM at Harpers Ferry is now presented. The room adjoining the Bakery on Shenandoah Street is offered for rent. It is suitable for a Grocery, Shoe Store, or other purpose, and will be rented on accommodating terms. Possession given at any time.

WM. RICHARDS

Harpers Ferry, Oct. 18, 1860-3t.²⁴

It is not known whether Richards found a tenant for the store, and the pre-Civil War occupancy record ends there. Richards moved to Georgia at some time after the 1860 census, and never resumed residence at Harpers Ferry.

Civil War to 1952

No complete record of the building's occupancy during the Civil War exists. Graffiti (scribbling and stenciling) on the interior's northeast, second-floor wall suggest troop occupation, possibly Quartermaster Corps, prior to May 1864. Treasury Department records of "Captured and Abandoned" property for the period of February 1864 through July 1865, and documentation in the records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands supply the only other data found. From those sources the following scenario develops:

²³ Snell, Bldg. 44, p. 8.

²⁴ Virginia Free Press, October 18, 1860, p3c1.

Philip Saunter occupied the building in February 1864, with troops on the second floor and the Masonic Hall above. No record of Philip Saunter has been found other than a Treasury report which placed him in Park Building 44. A month later Charles H. Trail and Truman W. Potterfield were each occupying rooms. In May 1864 they were still renting rooms and the troops had evidently vacated the building as Trail was "now repairing the upper part and wants the use of it for a time as an offset to cost." That occupancy continued until March of 1865, when the firm of Leisenring and Son replaced Truman W. Potterfield. Trail & Leisenring each occupied a store in Park Building 44 through at least July 1865, and Trail likely lived on the second floor. Trail vacated the building on December 1, 1865, and the Harpers Ferry Post Commander occupied his former space as a hospital. Leisenring's lease expired in January, 1866, and his rent was paid up through the end of that month, but he apparently continued renting the store, possession of which returned to Richards (who was living in Augusta, Georgia) in care of his agent, S. V. Yantis. It is not known when the military actually surrendered the "hospital" part of the building to Richards' agent, Yantis.²⁵

²⁵ Reels 242, 244, NA RG 56, General Records of the Treasury Department, Division of Cotton and Captured and Abandoned Property. Rents are interpreted as follows: A \$10 rent translates to \$120 a year, \$1,200 value of the building; when Saunter was in Bldg. 44 he paid \$10, and when Trail/Potterfield were in Bldg. 44 they each paid \$5. Although variations are seen, "Leisenring" is the usual spelling of that name.

The Leisenring firm remained in Park Building 44 for several years after the Civil War ended. In February 1868 an oil lamp exploded in the storeroom, and in August 1869 it was one of three local stores robbed. B. F. Leisenring was again robbed in 1870--a thief stole a \$20 bill from him. The store still occupied the building in March 1872, when an advertisement for the sale of William Richards' property noted B. F. Leisenring was doing "splendid business" in the storeroom and warehouse. Leisenring thus likely occupied all of the ground floor, and he may have lived in the five-room dwelling on the second floor. When Charles Trail vacated the premises is not known (in the 1870 census he listed his occupation as worker in the flour mill).²⁶

William Richards sold Park Building 44 to Harpers Ferry merchant Murtha Walsh in April 1872. Despite the "splendid business" Leisenring's store had been doing, Leisenring filed for bankruptcy in September 1872. It is not known if his business was still in Park Building 44 then, but no subsequent mention of a B. F. Leisenring

NA RG 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freeman and Abandoned Lands. Microfilm Series M1048, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, Roll 54, Records Relating to Specific Bureau Functions, Case Files Relating to Applications for and Restoration of Property, R-Y, Aug 1865-Dec. 1866, (contains William Richard's loyalty oath and notes restoration of his property in January 1866); Ibid, Entry 4306, Registered Letters Received Aug. 1865-Dec. 1868, Office of the Sub-assistant Commissioner (Winchester, Va.) for the State of Virginia; Ibid, Entry 4308, Reports Forwarded to the Assistant Commissioner and Received from Subordinates Jan. 1866-June 1868.

²⁶ JCC, Deed Book 2, p. 37, February 26, 1867, Deed of Trust; Virginia Free Press, March 16, 1872, p2c5; Reel 137, Ninth Census (1870), p. 458 of Harpers Ferry; p. 460 of Harpers Ferry; Virginia Free Press, August 12, 1869, p3c2; July 2, 1870, p2c1.

business at Harpers Ferry has been found.²⁷

Little information has emerged on tenants of Park Building 44 after Murtha Walsh bought it, but it is unlikely Walsh himself occupied the structure as he kept his store on WL 10 until 1884 when he moved to the new storeroom and dwelling he built on Block A, Lot 6. An advertisement in December 1887 promoted the "Great Bankrupt Clothing Sale under the Old Masonic Hall" at Harpers Ferry, commencing January 3, 1888. No other information on the "Bankrupt" clothing store has been found.²⁸

Photograph HF-446, dated 1890s, shows the sign "J. F. Cassell Bro . . . Roofing Stoves . . ." hanging from a pipe extending from the second floor iron balcony of Park Building 44. The pipe was visible in photograph HF-82 of the 1889 flood, but without a sign. J. F. Cassell was a local plumber and dealer in metalwork who later had shops on High Street and on Block B, Lot 1.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid, September 7, 1872, p2c5. B. F. Leisenring was a member of Harpers Ferry Eureka Lodge No. 25 of the Masons in 1869, but by 1872 he was listed as an officer of the Bethesda Chapter at Middleway (Virginia Free Press, June 29, 1872, p3c2). No further local mention of B. F. Leisenring was found. Robert S. Leisenring (listed on the 1870 Harpers Ferry census in B. F. Leisenring's household as 10 years old and was likely a son) "of Charlestown" was appointed an assistant to Harpers Ferry Postmaster C. B. Wentzell in August 1885 (Spirit of Jefferson, August 11, 1885, p3c1). By 1888 Robert S. Leisenring had moved to Nebraska, from whence he returned to marry Miss Cora Easterday of Charlestown (Farmers Advocate, October 20, 1928, p2c3, "Forty Years Ago" column).

²⁸ Harpers Ferry Sentinel, December 31, 1887, p5c4. A similar advertisement ran in the January 5 and 12, 1888, issues of the Virginia Free Press.

²⁹ Spirit of Jefferson, May 6, 1884, p3c1;

Mary Johnson, Draft Report "Lots 1 to 7, Block A, to Lot 1, Block B, Shenandoah Street (Part of the Old Arsenal Yard) Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (1869 to Park Acquisition)," Historical Research Report, National Park Service/University of Maryland Cooperative Agreement, December 1994, p. 165.

The 1894 and 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps showed the building just as "dwelling." In 1907 the northeast store was labelled "plumber & tin shop" (possibly the Cassell business) and the southwest as "dwelling."

The 1912 Sanborn map continued the 1907 identification. But in 1910 William Clevenger had applied stucco to the front of the "Walsh's property occupied by Fry & Koontz" (a butcher firm). The year before that, however, E. B. Frye had bought the northeast bay of adjacent Park Building 43, and sometime in the next decade he moved the putcher shop there.³⁰

In 1916 and 1917 C. M. "Buck" Larue and family moved back and forth across Shenandoah Street, alternating between a building on Block C., Lot 1 and park Building 44, remaining in the latter from 1917 to 1923. At first "Buck" Larue had a shoe repair business in the southwest bay of Park Building 44, and the family lived on the second floor. A "Mr. Harroll" occupied the northeast bay as a clock and watch repair shop until he moved in April 1918 "a door above" (to the southwest bay of Park Building 43). "Mr. Harroll" as W. E. "Chubby" Harrell, a legendary local fixit and general repair man. In June 1918 "Buck" Larue opened a delicatessen shop next to his shoe repair shop, thus occupying all of Park Building 44's ground floor. Buck Larue advertised a full line of best groceries in April 1919,

³⁰ Patricia Chickering, Draft "Historic Structure Report, Park Building 43: McCabe-Marmion Building, Historic Data Section," HAFE Package 115, National Park Service/University of Maryland, Cooperative Agreement, Historical Research Project, December 1994, pp. 23, 24.

and the Farmers Advocate noted in July 1919 that Miss Pearl Larue, a clerk in her father's store, had purchased a Victrola and records and entertained friends when not pressed for time clerking at the store.³¹

The Larue grocery business grew in the following years, until March 1920 when the Farmers Advocate reported "Buck" Larue went out of the shoe repair trade. The store had become a popular spot in the evenings, when the musical Larues and friends--"Buck" on basshorn, a son on the mandolin, and Messrs. Harrell and Roderick playing guitar--entertained customers.³²

The 1922 Sanborn map showed "store" in the northeast bay and "dwelling" in the southwest bay. In March 1923 the Larues moved to a High Street house vacated by Earle Kronk. After that, in February 1924, Frank Drew and his sister Virginia Lee moved to the apartment in Park Building 44 from their Virginus Island residence. Frank died in November that year. His sister, "Miss Lee," died in a fire there in March 1931. Although the Sanborn map of 1933 indicated stores in both of Park Building 44's bays, no information on business

³¹ Farmers Advocate, September 29, 1917, p2c3; April 13, 1918, p2c2; June 15, 1918, p2c3;

Personal communication, Patricia Chickering with Mrs. Isabel Kern Flanagan, 1992-1994, and Mrs. Rosalie Larue Lloyd, December 1993. Mrs. Flanagan remembered both Chubby Harroll, and the Larue store; Mrs. Lloyd spoke of the family home in Bldg. 44, and stated as a young girl she helped out in the store.

Farmers Advocate, July 12, 1919, p2c1.

³² Ibid, March 20, 1920, p1c5. Ms. Rosalie Larue Lloyd disputed that news report stating her father always kept a shoe repair business while he lived at Harpers Ferry.

Ibid, March 12, 1921, p1c2, 3. Mrs. Lloyd affirmed the family's musical talents; she also stated a brother played in Sousa's band.

occupants subsequent to the Larues has been found.³³

³³ Ibid, March 31, 1923, p1c2; February 2, 1924, p1c1; November 22, 1924, p1c1;

Spirit of Jefferson, January 13, 1932, p6c2. Former Harpers Ferry residents Isabel Kern Flanagan, Rosalie Larue Lloyd, and Elizabeth Biller Knight all recalled that "Miss Lee Drew" "burned up" in the apartment above the stores in

Appendix A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Philip Coons
William Richards

by Patricia Chickering

PHILIP COONS

An October 1818 notice of letters at the Harpers Ferry post office including Philip Coons' name is the first mention of him locally. Similar notices appeared often in subsequent years.³⁴

Detail is lacking on Philip Coons' birthplace, although censuses suggest he was likely born in Virginia in 1800. Censuses include several "Coons" listings, under various spellings over the years but "Coons" is the most usual spelling for Philip Coons. It is impossible to determine if these were several generations of one family or several unrelated families.³⁵

By the mid-1820s Philip Coons was man of note in Harpers Ferry. In 1825 he, like his contemporary John G. Wilson, requested permission to erect house on the public land. George Bomford of the Ordnance Department in Washington responded that he had no problems with Coons' request to establish "slaughter house" on public land at Harpers Ferry, provided "no new buildings are erected." But Coons did erect a building. When, in February 1829, Armory Superintendent James Stubblefield reported on buildings erected by private individuals on government property at Harpers Ferry, he identified as Lot No. 3 a stone, rough-cast building, owned by Philip and David Coons, used as dwelling-house, boarding-house and butchery, erected in 1826 by authority of the War Department, and worth \$2500. He further stated:

Lot No. 3, under same head, is situated on the Shenandoah river near the United States ferry. The house built upon it is a large stone building used as a boarding-house for the public workmen. One of the occupants is employed as watchman at the armory; the other is an enterprising butcher, who furnishes much the greater part of the meat consumed by the armory workmen.³⁶

During an 1827 investigation Coons testified on behalf of Armory Superintendent Stubblefield, and, with 78 other Jefferson County citizens, in June 1829 he signed petition in support of Stubblefield. Coons may have been protecting his own interests, as Stubblefield had contracted with Coons for delivery of charcoal and wood to the Armory. In August 1829 the new Armory Superintendent, Thomas Dunn wrote to Colonel George Bomford of the Ordnance Department questioning that contract. Dunn said he had told Coons to stop delivering as there was adequate supply on hand for the rest of the year, and further stated he could get charcoal & wood for 25% to 33% less.³⁷

³⁴ Farmer's Repository, October 7, 1818, p3c3.

³⁵ Various spelling for the name include: Coontz, Coonce, Koonce, Koontz, Coons, Koonz.

³⁶ Reel 14, Vol. 6, p. 505; Reel 17, Vol. 3, pp. 234-237.

³⁷ Reel 14, Vol. 5, p. 410; Reel 22, Vl. 2, p. 157; Ibid. Vol. 7, p. 670; Ibid. Vol. 5, pp. 493-497.

By October 1829 efforts were underway to bridge the Shenandoah River, replacing the Government ferry (at that time operated by the Wagers), and Philip Coons was among signers of a petition to that end on behalf of the Shenandoah Bridge Company. Superintendent Dunn supported the effort, and sent the petition to George Bomford, noting that the government would receive free access to the bridge in exchange for granting government land for piers and a toll house.³⁸

Coons' diverse business interests apparently prospered, and by December 1829 he had considerable real estate holdings. That month he gave notice forbidding hunters from trespassing on his land in Loudoun two miles below Harpers Ferry, and on his islands in the Potomac River above and below the town. He still owned the large stone building near the Shenandoah ferry.³⁹

The Shenandoah River bridge scheme did not materialize at that time, and the ferry remained, operated by Coons, in 1831. That March Armory Superintendent George Rust, Jr., informed George Bomford that for the year just ended the ferry had been rented to "Mr. Philip Coons for the sum of \$251," and for the next year it had been rented (at public auction) to Mr. William Graham for \$462. Not only did Graham offer to pay a higher rent than Coons, he agreed to furnish a "good and substantial boat (which has long been wanting)."⁴⁰

A legal notice of November 1831 listed Coons as plaintiff in a chancery case, with James Stubblefield Sr. and James Stubblefield Jr. among several defendants. Unfortunately the nature of the action is not known.⁴¹

Philip Coons first appeared in the Harpers Ferry Census in 1830, heading a household of 3 free white males, 3 free white females, 5 female slaves, 4 free colored males and 1 free colored female. In 1840 his household numbered 6 free white males, 4 free white females, and 6 female slaves. Judging by his age in the 1850 census, Philip Coons would have been 30 and 40 in 1840 and 1840 respectively. At least two of Coons' children died in infancy between 1830 and 1840.⁴²

³⁸ Reel 22, Vol. 6, p. 519.

³⁹ Virginia Free Press, December 2, 1829, p4c3. Among other ventures, Coons ran a boarding house, operated a slaughter house, leased the Shenandoah Ferry, supplied charcoal and wood to the armory, conducted a store, owned (or leased) a bakery, and invested in various local enterprises.

⁴⁰ Reel 22, Vol. 12, p. 1118.

⁴¹ Virginia Free Press, November 17, 1831, p3c5.

⁴² Reel 246, Fifth Census (1830), p. 164 of Harpers Ferry;
Reel 247, Sixth Census (1840), p. 238 of Harpers Ferry;
Reel 248, Seventh Census (1850), p. 416B of Harpers Ferry;
Virginia Free Press, April 9, 1835, p2c6. Obituary for Philip Berryman Coons, 6 months old; Ibid, October 12, 1837, p3c3. Obituary for Clara Hammet Coons, one year old.

In March 1834 Coons advertised:

As I have determined to remove to the West, I will offer for sale my Property, situated in Harpers-Ferry, Virginia, consisting of a large and commodious DWELLING HOUSE and stabling, Ice-House (which is at present filled,) Slaughter House, Smoke House, &c.

The above property is well calculated for a TAVERN, being an immediate stand on the Winchester, Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road

. . .
I will also sell my FARM and DISTILLERY, situated in Loudoun county, VA., within two miles of Harpers-Ferry, on the Potomac river . . .⁴³

The first parcel likely is the same property James Stubblefield described in February 1829 as privately-built on Government land. Coons changed his plans, and did not then go west. He remained prominent locally for the next twenty years.

During the 1930s the government moved to acquire title to structures private individuals erected on Armory land. Among those were Philip Coons' buildings south of Shenandoah Street. Appraisers evaluated the properties, and the Ordnance Department in 1833, 1834 and 1835 unsuccessfully sought Congressional appropriations for their purchase. Congress finally voted the appropriation in July 1836, and in December 1836 Philip Coons accepted payment of \$3,298 in full payment for his claim.⁴⁴

That cash infusion came at the time bankrupt James B. Wager's properties were being offered for sale, and may explain the business endeavors Coons entered upon in partnership with James Duncanson. In 1836 Coons was plaintiff in a Chancery case involving several defendants, and a "James Duncanson" was a trustee for one of the defendants; that was possibly the same James Duncanson who was a partner with Coons in purchasing WL 46.⁴⁵

Philip Coons belonged to Harpers Ferry Charity Lodge No. 111 of the Masons and served on Committees of arrangements. He served on a Democratic Committee of Vigilance in May 1839 and later years.⁴⁶

The Constitutionalist reported in May 1839 that a "Mr. Sweetman" had taken possession of the bakery of Philip Koons [sic], but the paper failed to describe the location. By then Coons owned or had rights to several former Wager properties in Harpers Ferry Lower Town. With James Duncanson he had purchased WL 46 and WL 53 and at some time he

⁴³ Ibid, March 27, 1834, p3c3.

⁴⁴ Snell, "A Comprehensive History," Vol. I, pp. 163-165.

⁴⁵ Virginia Free Press, March 10, 1836, p3c3.

⁴⁶ Ibid, May 19, 1830, p3c4; May 28, 1835, p3c3; May 1, 1839, p3c6&7; May 26, 1842, p3c4.

acquired an interest in WL 14. He was an established store-keeper in the 1840s, and a member of the Harpers Ferry Savings Institution.⁴⁷

Philip Coons continued doing business with the U. S. Armory. In April 1843 Armory Superintendent Col. Henry K. Craig submitted for payment an account of Philip Coons for wood "cut by him and hauled by others" in the winter of 1840-1841. The Shenandoah Bridge endeavor revived that year, when Colonel Craig recommended as a site the "2nd alley west of the Master Armorer's House" (later Bridge Street). Philip Coons, as president of the Shenandoah Bridge Company, wrote Colonel Craig that the company decided to place the bridge at the recommended site.⁴⁸

The Shenandoah River Bridge scheme became a reality when the 406 foot span opened in December 1844. An account in the Spirit of Jefferson stated "it is acknowledged by all who are acquainted with the subject that [the project] . . . would have failed, but for the great energy and untiring zeal, with which Mr. PHILIP COONS exerted himself." Apparently the bridge was a financial success, as three years later a news report of a meeting at Shepherdstown to consider a bridge over the Potomac River stated the Shenandoah Bridge at Harpers Ferry had realized a "Handsome amount" on money invested.⁴⁹

Many news items throughout the 1840s attest to Coons' prominence in local affairs. He remained a member of the Harpers Ferry Savings Institution, offered all manner of goods for sale, continued serving with the Masons, advertised boats running on the C & O Canal to Georgetown or Alexandria, was appointed an overseer for the poor, again was on a Committee of Vigilance at Harpers Ferry and in 1849 was elected a School Commissioner in District 25.⁵⁰

In May 1849 Armory Superintendent Major John Symington granted Coons as School Commissioner permission to build a school on public land. In 1850 Coons declared he held a patent issued by Maryland for 3 ³/₄ acres of the land on which the Armory (Potomac) river wall and

⁴⁷ Constitutionalist, May 29, 1839, p3c4;

JCC Deed Book 24, p. 214; Deed Book 24, p. 298;

Constitutionalist, January 28, 1841, p3c2;

Virginia Free Press, February 11, 1841, p3c5; January 20, 1842, p3c2.

⁴⁸ Reel 23, Vol. 2, pp. 188, 190; Reel 26, Vol. 2, p. 104.

⁴⁹ Spirit of Jefferson, January 10, 1845, p2c6;

Virginia Free Press, November 10, 1847, p2c2.

⁵⁰ Ibid, January 30, 1842, p3c2, January 12, 1843, p3c3; June 15, 1843, p3c3; June 22, 1843, p3c5; August 3, 1843, p3c2; July 1, 1847, p3c6&7;

Spirit of Jefferson, November 7, 1848, p4c3;

Virginia Free Press, April 12, 1849, p3c3. This item stated Coons was not a resident of District 25 and that a new election was to be held at Pipertown on April 20, 1849.

embankment sat and claimed compensation.⁵¹

In 1850 Philp Coons' household included Coons (50), a merchant born in Virginia; Ann C. (40) born in Virginia; Emma (19) born in Virginia; Harry (12) born in Virginia; Chilton (13) born in Virginia; Harriet Brua (63) born in Maryland; John Donohoe (22), a clerk born in Virginia; and seven female and two male slaves.⁵²

By May 1851 Philip Coons was serving on the new Harpers Ferry council. In that capacity he wrote Major Symington that:

We will only add, that it will be the object of the council to adopt at once such sanative measures as will prevent the recurrence of the scenes of distress, and suffering caused by that awful scourge, the cholera, last summer, and more recently by that loathsome disease, the small pox."⁵³

In July 1851 Coons, as president of the Hillsborough and Harpers Ferry Turnpike Company, wrote Major Symington requesting use of a stone house on the south side of the Shenandoah River as a tollhouse. He felt that use of the house at a modest rent would be fair exchange for benefits accruing to the Armory from the road--including free passage for Armory employees and the waiving of tolls for wood & coal going to the armory. After a flood in April 1852 left Harpers Ferry "cellars and streets in a miserable and filthy condition" Coons required government financial aid for cleaning and liming cellars and streets.⁵⁴

Philip Coons' daughter Emma married Jefferson County Sheriff James A. Beckham in August or September 1851. In June 1852 Coons advertised a "classical and English school" would open at Harpers Ferry in July, and stated he had engaged a Princeton College graduate as teacher. With local luminaries A. H. Herr, Isaac Fouke, Edward Lucas and Jas. L. Ranson he embarked on a new venture in 1853--the "Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad."⁵⁵

As was common practice at the time, Coons dealt on credit in his store, and often accepted assignment of armory employee wages in exchange for store goods. That practice, coupled with an extensive business portfolio which was diverse in the extreme, may have led to financial over-extension. A flurry of news notices beginning late

⁵¹ Historian Michael A. Jenkins believes the school in question was at Pipertown.

Reel 18, Vol. 8, p. 766.

⁵² Reel 248, Seventh Census (1850) p. 416B of Harpers Ferry; Reel 249, Seventh Census, Slave (1850), p. 314 of Harpers Ferry.

⁵³ Reel 24, Vol. 5, p. 391.

⁵⁴ Reel 24, Vol. 5, p. 405, 409; Reel 24, Vol. 8, p. 755.

⁵⁵ Spirit of Jefferson, September 2, 1851, p3c2; June 22, 1852, p3c3; April 19, 1853, p4c7.

in 1853 and continuing through 1854, 1855, 1856, and 1857 in which Coons called in all debts and offered stock for sale and store house for rent or sale, suggest that he had encountered monetary problems. Finally his business partnership with James A. Beckham ended (Beckham continued in business with Louis S. Coons as Beckham & Co.), and in 1856 and 1857 Philip Coons' trustees offered virtually all Coons' property for sale.⁵⁶

At some time during the late 1850s Philip and Ann Coons left Harpers Ferry. On August 9, 1866, he died at St. Louis, Missouri. Annie C. Coons died there in the summer of 1879.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Reel 24, Vol. 5, p. 487;

JCC Deed Book 31, p. 61;

Virginia Free Press, February 15, 1855, p3c1. Just one among many such newspaper items, this offers stock, storehouse, and dwelling for sale;

Spirit of Jefferson, May 24, 1855, p3c2; May 31, 1856, p3c1; July 24, 1856, p2c5. The Harpers Ferry History Database contains many such notices.

⁵⁷ Ibid, August 21, 1866, p3c1; July 1, 1879, p2c4.

William Richards

Little is known of the personal life of William Richards, although for twenty years during the 1840s and 50s he was a person of note on the Harpers Ferry scene. Post-Civil War documentation, however affords a description of him in 1865 as being of "fair" complexion, with gray eyes and hair, and 5 feet 11 inches tall. Richards is of particular interest because he owned Park Buildings 40 and 44 for some time.⁵⁸

The first instance of the name "William Richards" in the available historical record is an 1818 list of letters at the Harpers Ferry Post Office. That may not be the subject Richards, who died at age 70 in 1877, and would therefore have been only eleven years old in 1818. Richards' name next appeared in an 1834 list of letters at the Harpers Ferry Post Office.⁵⁹

A "William Richardson" appeared on the 1840 census, heading a household of two free white males (between ages 30 and 40, and 40 and 50) and on free white female (between age 20 and 30). That census shows two persons in the household employed in manufacture and trade. This may be the "William Richards" who placed a notice in the newspaper in April 1835 informing that he had taken the smith shop lately occupied by Lewis Wernwag on Virginus Island. In December 1837 William Richards married Miss Sarah Shoemaker, daughter of Joseph Shoemaker of Harpers Ferry (Joseph Shoemaker, in the 1830 census, resided on Virginus Island).⁶⁰

Armory rent rolls show that in 1841 William Richards occupied House No. 168 (a two-story stone structure renting for \$8.57 a quarter) and 1849-1851 House No. 156 (a two-story brick structure renting for \$18 a quarter), both on Hall's Island. The houses were rented to other tenants in the mid-1840, and no record of where Richards lived in the interim has been found. The Armory withheld both houses from the 1852 sale, at which Richards bought Lot 1 of Block I on Camp Hill.⁶¹

⁵⁸ NA RG 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Microfilm Series M1048, Roll 54, Richards' description is appended to his post-Civil War loyalty oath.

⁵⁹ Farmers Repository, April 1818, p3c4;

Virginia Free Press, April 1834, c3c2.

⁶⁰ Sixth Census, 1840, p.242 of Harpers Ferry;

Virginia Free Press, April 30, 1835, p3c3; December 7, 1837, p3c3.

⁶¹ Charles Snell, "A Descriptive Catalog . . . pp. 204, 207, 287. Union troops destroyed Houses 168 and 156 in 1864 to make way for the railroad being built to supply Sheridan's army in the Shenandoah Valley. No rent rolls after 1852 are available as Treasury accounts covering the late Armory period were among documents National Archives declined to accession in the

On the 1850 census William Richards, age 41, born in Ohio, listed his occupation as "armorer"; the only other person in the household was Sarah A. Richards, 31, born in Pennsylvania.⁶²

During 1839 and 1840 William Richards served as a director of the Harpers Ferry Savings Institution. No other information on his activities during the 1840s has surfaced, however.⁶³

Richards purchased two prime Harpers Ferry commercial properties during the 1850s. In February 1850 he bought WL 49 with a dwelling from William and Amelia Chambers. Park Building 40 stands on that lot. Five and a half years later he purchased WL 46, with stone dwelling and the Free Mason Lodge (Park Building 44), from Philip and Ann Coons. It is not known if he lived in the dwelling portion of either building, but he certainly rented out the store space in both. In May 1850 he advertised the store house "recently occupied" by William Chambers on Shenandoah Street as a desirable location for a general country business; that property was Park Building 40. Less exact is an advertisement of 1859 wherein Richards offered the store room formerly occupied by Mr. Newton for rent, but because of a subsequent link between Newton and a bakery in Richards' property the store offered was likely in Building 44. Richards' first known association with a bakery was an advertisement of August 1859 in which he assured all who might attend a camp meeting near Harpers Ferry of being supplied with fresh bread and cakes. Completing the bakery/Newton/Richards connection was Richards' advertisement in October 18, 1860, offering the store room adjoining the bakery on Shenandoah Street--Park Building 44.⁶⁴

Perhaps it was income from these properties that enabled Richards, at age 52, to declare on the 1860 census his occupation as "retired gentleman." Also listed in his household on that census are Sarah A., 42 (white, female, born in Pennsylvania), and Sarah Griggs, 19 (white, female, born in Virginia), a domestic.⁶⁵

During the 1850s William Richards' name surfaced in connection with civic concerns (although he should not be confused with "Col. William Richards" of Winchester, who was a prominent participant in a huge

early 1950s. The fate of the records is unknown but they are presumed destroyed.

Reel 24, Vol. 7, p. 683; Reel 25, Vol. 10, p. 962-964.

⁶² Reel 248, Seventh Census, 1850, p. 403B of Harpers Ferry; Richards appeared on a January 1850 Armory payroll (NA Reel M1678, R-60, Frame 194).

⁶³ Virginia Free Press, May 2, 1839, p2c4; January 23, 1840, p3c1.

⁶⁴ JCC, Deed Book 31, p.109; Deed Book 35, p.9.

Virginia Free Press, May 9, 1850, p3c2; August 4, 1859, p3c1; September 1, 1859, p2c6; October 18, 1860, p3c1. Because the advertisement implies two commercial spaces, the property must have been Building 44; Richards' other Shenandoah Street property, Building 40, only had one store and in 1860 was occupied by Philip Frankel & Co.

⁶⁵ Reel 250, Eighth Census, 1860, p.197 of Harpers Ferry.

celebration held near Harpers Ferry to honor Charles J. Faulkner in 1853). The local William Richards served on the first Harpers Ferry town council in 1851 and was elected again in 1858 and 1859. He was a School Commissioner for District 24 in 1859, and in May 1860 the Jefferson County Court appointed him one of six Commissioners of Election for District 8.⁶⁶

At the government property sale of September 1852 William Richards purchased Lot 1, Block I, on Camp Hill, he completed payment of \$325 by December 1856. The lot did not hold a structure at that time.

Richards left Harpers Ferry sometime in the early 1860s, perhaps with the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861. During the Civil War his lower town Harpers Ferry property was considered as "abandoned," and the owner listed as being in Georgia. Although Richards had come to Harpers Ferry from Ohio, apparently his sympathy lay with the Southern cause. His name, however, has not been found on lists of Harpers Ferry armorers who went to work for Confederate armories.⁶⁷

In February 1864 Charles Trail occupied the store part of Richards' two-story stone building (Park Building 40) and soldiers the remained, Philip Saunter occupied the store part of his three-story stone building (Park Building 44). The government granted Thomas Purcival a lease to the two-story stone building in March 1864, but the report on rents collected that month showed military forces occupied the structure and refused to give it up. Two months later government agent E. C. Parkhurst reported that "The roof has fallen into the house leased to Thomas Purcival, caused by the soldiers removing supports. It cannot be occupied, untill roof is replace." Park photograph HF-35 dated to as early as 1871 clearly shows Park Building 40 missing its roof, therefore repairs were not made while the building was in government custody. Park Building 44, however, remained occupied in 1864 and 1865, with the stores initially leased to Charles Trail and T. W. Potterfield, and later with Trail also renting the dwelling above. Potterfield was succeeded by Leisenring & Son in 1865, and records show rents were paid up through July that year. The property remained in U.S. government control until January 1866, when it was restored to Richards after he swore loyalty to the U. S. Constitution and Union of the States. S. V. Yantis as Richards' agent signed a receipt from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, for "the dwelling house and lot located at Harpers Ferry, Va." Yantis did not immediately secure possession, however. In February 1866, when the commander of the Sixth District, Virginia,

⁶⁶ Virginia Free Press, May 9, 1851, p2c2; May 6, 1858, p2c2; May 5, 1859, p2c5; March 10, 1859, p2c7

Independent Democrat, May 8, 1860, p2c7.

⁶⁷ Reels 242, 244, NARG 56, Treasury Department, Records of Cotton and Captured and Abandoned Property; when property was adjudged "abandoned" rents collected went to the Treasury.

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands sought to restore Park Building 44 to Yantis, part of the structure was occupied as a hospital on order of Lt. Col. J. R. Edie, Post Commander at Harpers Ferry, who was reluctant to give it up. Because one tenant, Leisenring, continued to keep a store in the building through the end of the decade and into the 1870s, the "hospital" likely was in the "stone dwelling house and store" portion which Charles Trail had occupied. It is not known when Lt. Col. Edie finally surrendered the property to Yantis.⁶⁸

William Richards did not resume residence in Harpers Ferry after the Civil War. Edward Tearney was agent for William Richards when he advertised all Richards' Harpers Ferry property for sale in 1872. The advertisement noted B. F. Leisenring, Merchant, occupied both the store room and adjoining warehouse, and was doing "a splendid business" in the "stand, being one of the best in town for town and country trade." The deed conveying WL49 with Park Building 40 stated Richards was of "Hall County, Georgia."⁶⁹

William Richards' wife Sarah Ann died in April 1866 of pneumonia and typhoid fever while visiting friends in Harpers Ferry. Her husband travelled from Augusta, Georgia, when informed of her illness, but he arrived too late. William Richards died eleven years later, in December 1877, at the home of Mr. W. S. Shuttles in Atlanta, Georgia. His remains were interred in Baltimore beside his wife.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Reel 242, Frames 2, 21, 25, 28, 30, 34, 46, 69; Reel 244, Frames 1-9.

NA RG 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Microfilm Series M1048, Roll 50; Entry 4306 (Registered Letters); Entry 4308 (Reports).

⁶⁹ Virginia Free Press, March 16, 1872, p2c5. The advertisement also offered the ruins of park Building 40, and two vacant lots on Camp Hill adjacent to the Methodist parsonage (perhaps the property Richards purchased at the 1852 Armory sale).

JCC Deed Book 7, p. 198, April 27, 1872. Richards who in 1866 had been living in Augusta (Richmond County), Georgia had evidently moved to Hall County in the north central part of the state sometime in the interim.

⁷⁰ Virginia Free Press, May 10, 1866, p2c5; December 22, 1877, p3c1.

MAPS

WAGER LANDS AT HARPERS FERRY**

SANBORN-PERRIS FIRE INSURANCE MAPS:

1894, 1902, 1907, 1912, 1922, 1933

** The map bears the following legend [exact transcription]:

TRACING OF 1835 PLAT OF WAGER LOTS. ORIGINAL IN DEED BOOK NO. 29, 1847-48*, PAGE 140. LOCATED IN THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE IN CHARLES TOWN, WEST VIRGINIA BY PROF. HENRY EDWARDS IN THE SUMMER OF 1955. ORIGINAL DRAWN BY JAMES B. BROWN, S.G.C. LARGER POLYGON SOMETIME REFERRED TO AS THE WAGER SIX ACRE RESERVATION. REFER TO COPY OF ORIGINAL DEED DATED OCTOBER 10, 1935 FOR DESCRIPTION OF DIV[IS]ION OF LOT BETWEEN THE WAGER HEIRS.

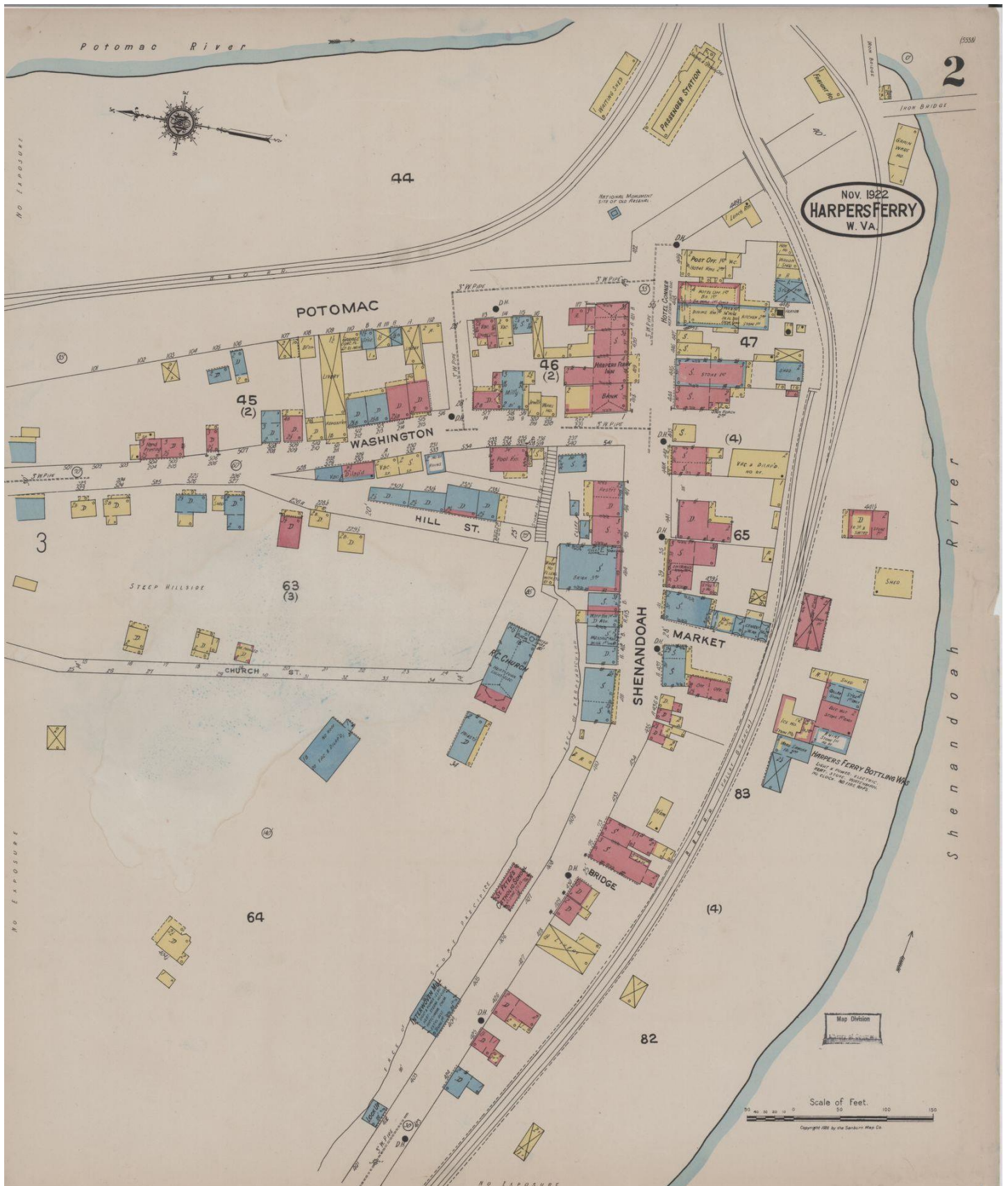
*While there is a disparity between these dates and the date of the deed these dates are correct for reference to finding the original. The original plat is pasted into the deed book and folded three times. It is torn on some of the folds and has been poorly patched making it difficult to photograph [sic] or trace.

Note also descrepanc[e]y between overall dimension and lot dimensions of line extended.









PHOTOGRAPHS

HF-1768

HF-82

HF-99

HF-446

HF-1086

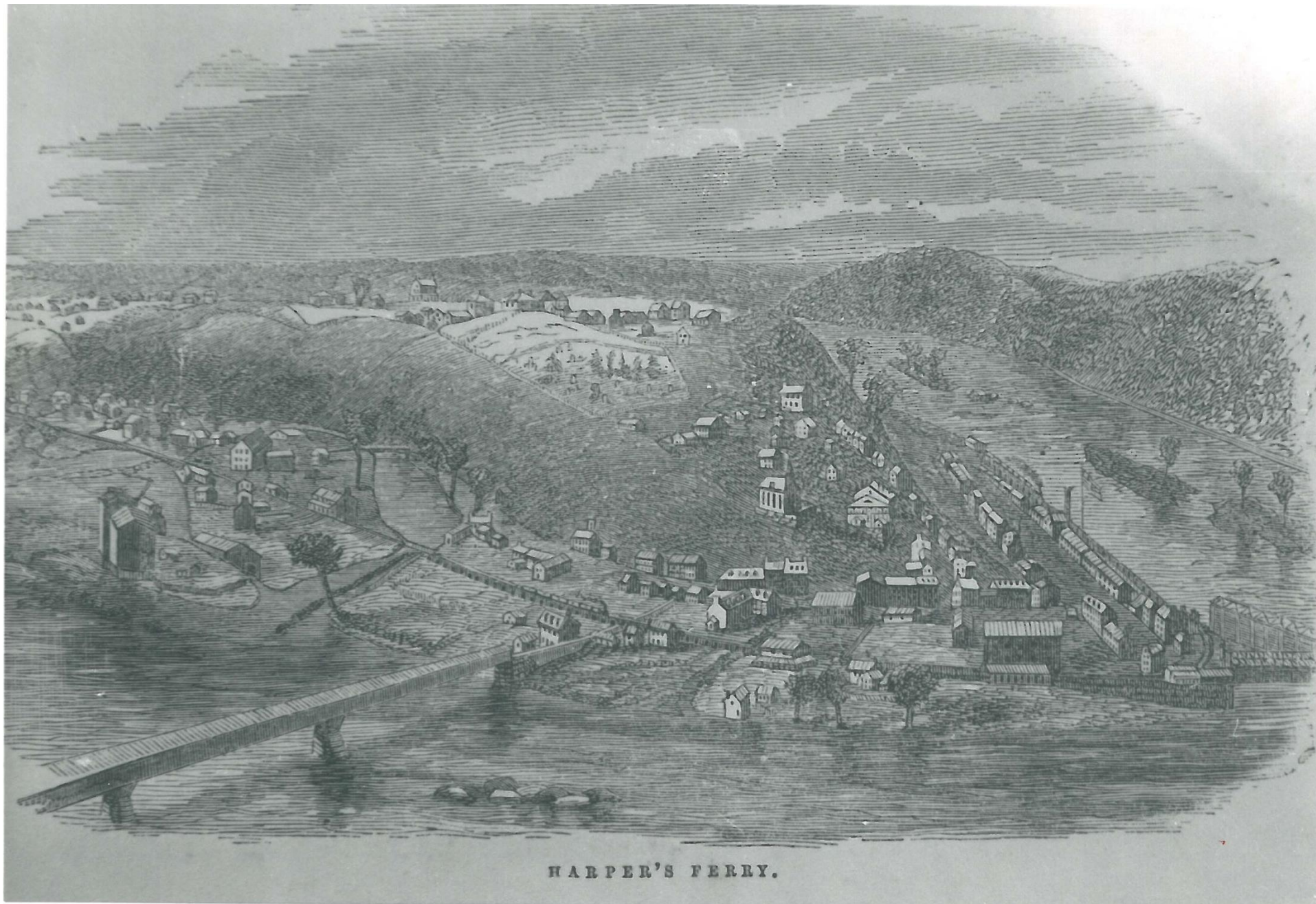
HF-1444

HF-1582

HF-311

Ca. 1854; engraving reprinted from Eli Bowen, *Rambles in the Path of the Steam Horse*, (Philadelphia: Bromwell & Smith, 1855), p. 191

Park Building 44 is the structure without gables in the roof immediately below the church.



HARPER'S FERRY.

1889; Shenandoah Street in the aftermath of the flood.

Park Building 44 is in the center of the buildings on the right, with the iron balcony at the second floor.



ca. 1892-1896

View of Lower Town from Loudoun Heights; Park Building 44 is in the center of the group of three structures immediately below the church, the one without gables in the roof.



ca. 1890s

Park Building 44 is the center structure with the iron balcony and the J. F. Cassell sign



ca. early 1920s

Park Building 44 is on right, between the structure with the three-story porch (Park Building 43) and the two-story, gable-roofed building (Park Building 45)



Oldest Part of Shenandoah Street. Harper's Ferry, W. Va.

HF-1444
HF-1542

ca. 1920s

These photos were taken during the same parade; Park Building 44 is immediately to the right of the second utility pole





ca. 1950s

Park Building 44 is the farthest three-story structure on the right.



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