D-176

Park Building 75
(Curtis Freewill Baptist Church),
Fillmore and Jackson Streets, Camp Hill,
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Special History Study

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

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December 4, 1995

National Park Service/University of Maryland
Cooperative Agreement

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PREFACE

Park Building 75, more commonly known as the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, is located on the west side of Jackson Street, Camp Hill, in Harpers Ferry. The lot on which the church building stands is bounded on the east by Jackson Street, on the north by Washington Street, on the south by Fillmore Street, and on the west by Lots 1 and 14, Block JJ. These boundaries were established in 1869, when the United States deeded the land to Storer College. Washington Street was one of the earliest roads in Harpers Ferry. Jackson Street between Fillmore and Washington probably was only partially opened after the armory superintendent's house was constructed nearby in 1847-1848, while the section of Fillmore Street adjoining this lot only opened around 1869.

No previous history study of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church exists. In 1991, historians working at the Park under a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the University of Maryland began a study of Storer College and campus buildings. However, the information they gathered on the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church was sketchy and represented only the fruits of a quickly-cancelled project.

With regard to the present report, in the event a Historic Structures Report for Park Building 75 is prepared, the information herein could provide the basis for the history section. This report is primarily a physical history, providing known information on property ownership, the construction of the building, and use of the property. Because no evidence regarding use of this lot before the Civil War has been found, this report provides only general information on development of the nearby area and ownership of the land before the property was deeded to Storer College in 1869. The primary focus of this report is the church, built between 1889 and

1896. The historical overview presents general information on the Freewill Baptists and their expansion into the Shenandoah Valley after the Civil War. This section is meant to be a framework for understanding the history of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, not an exhaustive discussion of the historical contexts.

Extending back to the 1991 research, several people have contributed to this report. Patricia Chickering, lead historian on the cooperative agreement's historical research project, and John Barker, former project historian, were involved with the earlier research project. A special thanks goes to Michael Jenkins, assistant lead historian. He helped me wade through boxes of material at West Virginia University and locate records at the National Archives. As he has on other occasions, Mike took on much of the monotonous task of copying maps and photographs, thus making my work considerably easier than it would have been otherwise.

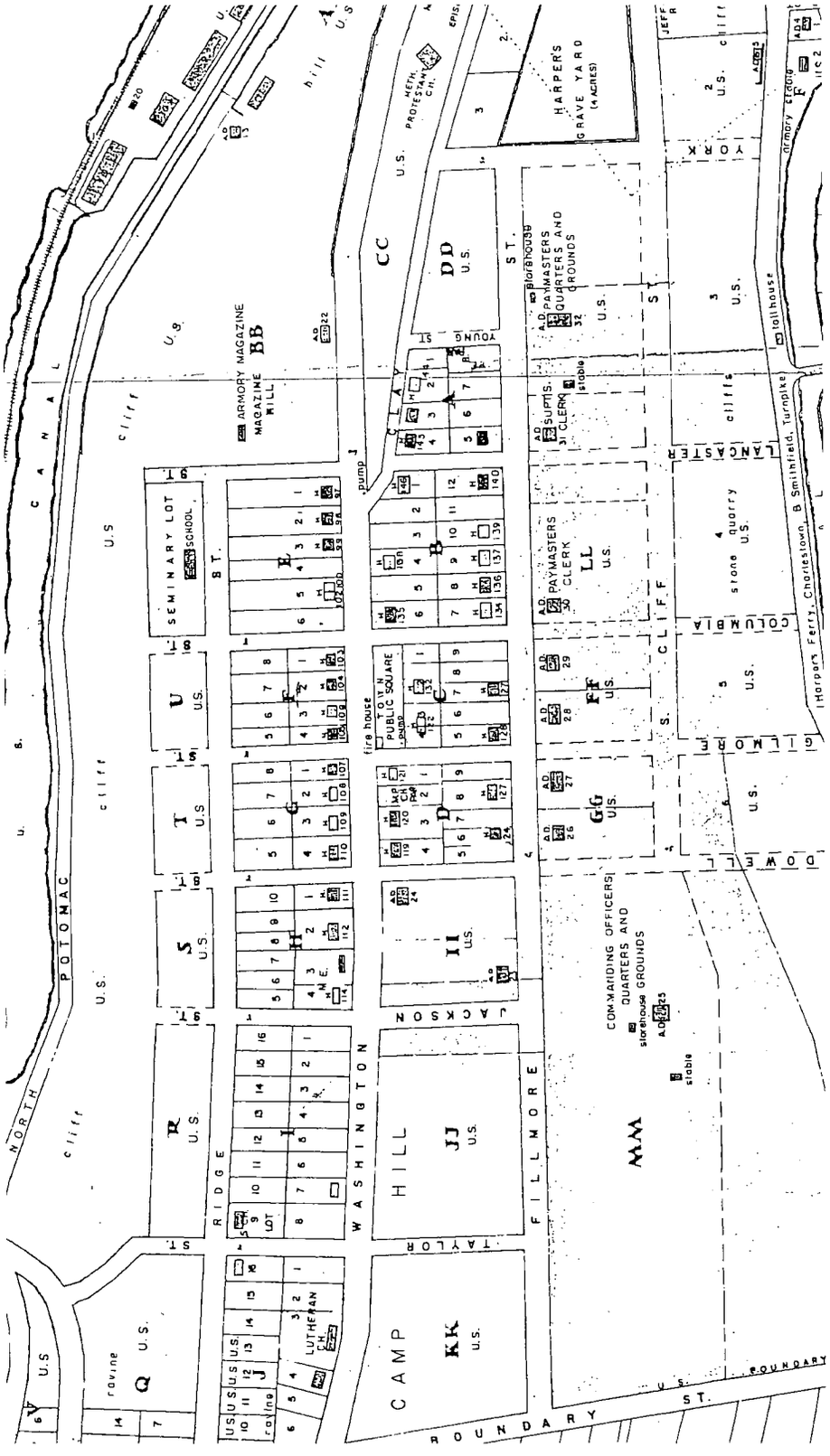


Figure 1. Historical Base Map of Harpers Ferry, 1859, by Charles Snell, 1959.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Freewill Baptist denomination was formally established in 1780, when a group of people led by Benjamin Randall, who rejected the prevailing calvinistic Baptist theology, formed a Freewill Baptist Church at New Durham, New Hampshire. By 1827, there were over 300 Freewill Baptist churches with 18,000 members, largely located in the rural parts of New England, New York, and Ohio. Beginning with the formation of the Home Mission Society in 1834, and especially after the Reverend Silas Curtis became the society's corresponding secretary in 1839, the Freewill Baptists sent missionaries into new areas. Churches organized in several midwestern states, and in 1853 a Freewill Baptist representative went to Canada to work among fugitive slaves.[1]

The Home Mission Society's efforts to increase denominational membership met with limited success, but the liberation of slaves during the Civil War opened a "promising field" for the Freewill Baptists, who saw an opportunity to "labor for the elevation and conversion of these benighted souls."[2] The Freewill Baptists established several missions in 1863 and 1864 in North and South Carolina and eastern Virginia, but these missions proved disappointing. One important impediment was President Andrew Johnson's decision to return confiscated land to former confederates. This action threatened both the continued presence of a permanent black population near the Carolina missions and the availability of property on which to locate mission buildings.

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[1]Norman Allen Baxter, History of the Freewill Baptists: A Study in New England Separatism (Rochester, NY: American Baptist Historical Society, 1957), pp. 24-5, 30-1, 78-80, 146, 153.

[2]Quoted in Meredith Dee Heinz, "This Promising Field: Silas Curtis and the Freewill Baptist Mission to the Freedmen, 1863-1870" (Master's Thesis, Marshall University, August 1994), p. viii.

Johnson's policy, and limited financial resources, affected the eastern Virginia missions as well.[3] The Freewill Baptists terminated the Carolina missions by the end of 1865 and began shifting attention and resources from those in eastern Virginia to a new field where they hoped "to do something permanently in relation to the establishment of churches and permanent places of worship _ and where the colored people will help sustain the schools & meetings of worship."[4]

In 1865, Nathan Brackett of Phillips, Maine, suggested the Freewill Baptists establish a mission in the Shenandoah Valley. Following his graduation from Dartmouth College in 1864, Brackett had joined the United States Christian Commission, an agency organized in 1861 to promote the spiritual well-being of soldiers, as well as their physical comfort. In 1864, the Christian Commission sent him to the Shenandoah Valley as an assistant field agent, in which capacity he gained firsthand knowledge of the area and the potential for mission work. Significantly, no freedmen's aid society had moved into the Shenandoah Valley as yet, and freedmen requested that Brackett send teachers and open schools for them. As a result, the Freewill Baptist Home Mission Society decided to open a mission in the valley and sent Brackett to Harpers Ferry and Winchester, Virginia, in October 1865 to investigate the prospects for schools in the area. The establishment of a Presbyterian freedmen's school in Winchester after Brackett had left the area earlier that year forced the Freewill Baptists to abandon plans to locate a school and mission in that community.[5] However, no freedmen's schools existed in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, and Capt. W. Stover How, the Freedmen's Bureau district

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[3]Heinz, pp. 12-5, 18, 20, 22, 26, 29, 31, 35.

[4]Quoted in Heinz, p. 35.

[5]Heinz, pp. 35, 39, 42; Silas Curtis to Bro. Brackett, 20 October 1865, Park Reel 113, Flash 1.

superintendent, assigned Jefferson and Berkeley counties to Brackett.[6]

Silas Curtis wrote Brackett that he was anxious the Freewill Baptists occupy "all that district." He knew the towns of Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, Shepherdstown, Charles Town, and Berryville were historic places. (Berryville is in Clarke County, Virginia.) Curtis was cautious, however, reserving his final opinion until he knew more about the prospects in each town. To his thinking, each town should have 300 to 600 blacks and either no school or no church for its black residents. Moreover, these places should have buildings that the Freewill Baptists could use for schools and churches. If all these requirements were met, Curtis thought the area "a grand opening" for the Freewill Baptists. Curtis promised to send four women teachers immediately so that Brackett could begin the Freewill Baptist mission.[7] As a result, the Freewill Baptists opened a freedmen's school in Harpers Ferry on November 25, 1865. Two years, later, aware that there were an insufficient number of Freewill Baptist teachers from the North to staff all the needed schools for blacks, and with assistance of benefactor John Storer of Sanford, Maine, the Freewill Baptists opened Storer College in Harpers Ferry as a normal school.[8]

Although the Freewill Baptists ultimately hoped the educational work among the freedmen would lead to the establishment of Freewill Baptist churches, those most closely connected to the education of blacks were careful not to make religious interests the primary purpose of their work. An 1867 report on the Shenandoah Valley mission underscored the fact that Brackett, who oversaw

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[6]Lt. Henry E. Smith to Capt. W.S. How, 31 October 1865, R.G. 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Entry 4306, Office of the Sub-assistant Commissioner (Winchester, Va.) for the State of Virginia, Registered Letters Received, National Archives; W. Stover How to Col. O. Brown, 7 November 1865, R.G. 105, M1053, Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Virginia, National Archives Roll 12, Frames 47-49, Monthly Statistical School Reports of the District Superintendent.

[7]Silas Curtis to Bro. Brackett, 7 November 1865 and 20 November 1865, Park Reel 113, Flash 1.

[8]Heinz, pp. 46, 76-8; Baxter, pp. 148-49; Kate Anthony, Storer College, Brief Historical Sketch, with Supplementary Notes, 1867-1891 (Boston: Morning Star Publishing House, 1891), pp. 4-5.

the Freewill Baptist educational activities there but also served under a commission from the Freedmen's Bureau, could only carry out his responsibilities so long as he was not seen "as a denominational man." Experience had already shown that schools suffered whenever blacks, many of whom belonged to the Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian churches that had operated in the Valley before the war, believed the teachers were trying to convert them to the Freewill Baptist faith.[9]

Nevertheless, when the Freewill Baptists decided to open a normal school for blacks in Harpers Ferry in 1867, long-term religious goals clearly were in the minds of some most intimately connected to the project. "We do not need a college now," Nathan Brackett informed readers of the Morning Star, the Freewill Baptist newspaper, "but we do need a school for training teachers; and, if we prosper, the day is not far distant when we shall need a school for training preachers." Brackett continued, "As things are, the success of the School depends on the Mission, and that of the Mission on the School. I believe that either alone would be worth something to the cause of Christ, but very little to us as a denomination."[10]

The 1867 report on the Shenandoah Valley mission recommended the Freewill Baptists send a missionary who was not connected with the school work. The Reverend C. J. Carter, a black minister from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, already was at work and had recently established a Freewill Baptist church at Martinsburg, West Virginia. At the request of the board of the Home Mission Society, the Reverend Alexander H. Morrell, a "successful and beloved pastor" from Bath, Maine, was appointed the Freewill Baptist missionary in the Shenandoah Valley in the Summer of 1867. Carter and J. W. Dungee soon were appointed his assistants; when illness

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[9]Morning Star, 26 June 1867, p. 1, cols. 1, 2, & 3.

[10]Morning Star, 25 December 1867, p. 3, col. 1.

forced Morrell to leave after just a few months, it was they and other black ministers who carried on the principal work of organizing Freewill Baptist churches until Morrell returned in 1870.[11] At the beginning of 1868, the Freewill Baptists had three churches in the Shenandoah Valley (Martinsburg, Harpers Ferry, and Charles Town), and by the end of 1869, they had four more churches (Berryville and Winchester, Virginia, and Leetown and Shepherdstown, West Virginia). The membership of these seven churches was nearly 500.[12]

The Freewill Baptist church was established at Harpers Ferry on November 12, 1867 with six members and four candidates for baptism. Although several other communities in the Shenandoah Valley where Freewill Baptists established churches erected buildings within a few years, the Harpers Ferry congregation did not do so for over twenty years. Instead, they worshipped in buildings owned by Storer College. From 1867 to 1869, they conducted church services in Lockwood House, sharing space with the freedmen's school and living quarters of the Brackett and Morrell families, other teachers, and a few students. After Storer College repaired and occupied the former armory superintendent's house (the original part of Anthony Memorial Hall) for school purposes in December 1869, the Freewill Baptists moved worship services to that building. There they remained until the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church was completed in 1896.[13]

Conversions among blacks in the Shenandoah Valley, other parts of West Virginia and Virginia, and several other southern states produced much of the growth in the Freewill Baptist denomination after the Civil War. Freewill Baptist membership in the denomination's traditional

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[11]Morning Star, 26 June 1867, p. 1, col. 3; 28 August 1867, p. 3, col. 1; 20 November 1867, p. 2, col. 2; 1 January 1868, p. 1, col. 2; Mary Brackett Robertson, "Traditions and Memories," Founders' Day Speech, 26 February 1937, p. 14, Storer College Binder 1936-1939.

[12]Morning Star, 1 January 1868, p. 1, col. 2; 10 November 1869, p. 1, col. 4; Heinz, pp. 114, 116-17, 119-21.

[13]Anthony, pp. 7, 9; Rev. N.C. Brackett, "Biographical Sketch of the Rev. A.H. Morrell," Star Pamphlets No. 11 (Boston: The F.B. Printing Department), p. 10, Storer College Binder Brackett, Newcomer, McDonald Papers #1. The congregations at Charles Town and Martinsburg started church buildings in 1868; Winchester and Shepherdstown began buildings in 1869. Heinz, pp. 117, 120-21.

stronghold in New England actually declined during the post-war years, and aside from southern blacks, the Freewill Baptists failed to recruit significant numbers of new members elsewhere. Consequently, talk of reunion with the Baptists, which began as early as 1859, persisted throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The two denominations worked out an agreement for union which effectively took place in 1911, when the Freewill Baptists transferred funds and other assets to the Baptists. Individual churches were left to pursue union at the local level, and most chose to follow the national organization over the next few years.[14]

Throughout these years, the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church was intimately associated with Storer College. Although the church did have a small congregation independent of the college, but church looked to the college for most of its worshippers and service leaders and attendance dwindled when college was not in session. Yet, the Curtis Church technically remained independent of Storer College until the college formally assumed financial responsibility in 1945 and the General Conference of Free Baptists transferred title to the land on which the church building stands to the college in 1952. Three years later, Storer College closed. In 1962, the Curtis Church building and land became part of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.[15]

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[14]Baxter, pp. 157-58, 162-68, 176-81.

[15]See pages 24, 26-28 of this report.

LOT AND BUILDING HISTORY

From 1796 to 1869, the land on which the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church (Park Building 75) stands was owned by the United States government, but no information on how, or even if, this land was used has been found. The establishment of a federal armory at Harpers Ferry at the turn of the nineteenth century eventually led to the construction of several houses for armory officers and workmen along Fillmore Street, but virtually all of these houses were built east of McDowell Street. To the west, the only house may have been the armory superintendent's quarters, constructed in 1847-1848, and it likely was following construction of this house that Jackson Street partially opened, that street providing the most direct access from the superintendent's house to Washington Street.[16]

In 1852, the United States sold fifty-six government houses and 220 vacant lots, but while much of Camp Hill land along Washington Street and west of the intersection with Clay Street was made available for purchase, of the land south of Washington Street, only that on the north side of Fillmore between Young and McDowell streets was offered.[17] The armory reserved the superintendent's and paymaster's quarters and their respective grounds, both located on Fillmore Street, and "a sufficient quantity of ground between them and Washington Street, to erect quarters for the Officers of the Armory, &c."[18] Thus, while a large portion of government land was

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[16]For details of armory house locations see Charles W. Snell, "A Comprehensive History of Armory Dwelling Houses of the U.S. Armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, 1798-1884," Vol. II, "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" (Denver Service Center, National Capital Team, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, September 1981).

[17]Charles W. Snell, "A Comprehensive History of the Construction, Maintenance and Numbers of Armory Dwelling Houses, 1796-1869," (Harpers Ferry National Monument, 13 January 1959), pp. 99-100; "Legend Exhibiting the Corresponding Numbers of the Houses as per the Inventory of the 30th June, 1852, with the Lots of Land as per Brown's Map of the Same," Map Collection, HFNHP. Only Blocks A, B, C, and D between Washington and Fillmore streets were sold in 1852.

[18]Report of Board of Officers, 24 September 1851, Park Reel 24, Vol. 8, p. 803.

made available for private purchase and development, a substantial amount of land along Fillmore Street and all the land south of Washington Street between McDowell and Boundary streets remained under government control until 1869. Over the intervening years, a major impact on the area was the Civil War, during which military troops were encamped across Camp Hill, including the area surrounding the former home of the armory superintendent.

In April 1867, Oren Cheney, president of the Freewill Baptist Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, approached Secretary of War Edwin Stanton about the possibility of getting government land for a normal school for blacks the Freewill Baptists planned to establish at Harpers Ferry. Stanton expressed an interest in Cheney's proposal but informed Cheney of a potential problem with the government's title: Robert Harper's heirs claimed that the land at Harpers Ferry was deeded to the United States solely for armory purposes and that ownership reverted to them once the government abandoned the armory.[19]

The Freewill Baptists were not deterred and solicited the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau in getting Armory Dwelling Nos. 25, 30, 31, and 32, the four government houses on Camp Hill that had been used prior to the Civil War by officers of the Harpers Ferry armory.[20] In January 1868, Oliver Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, requested that Secretary of War Stanton assign the latter three buildings with their respective lots and Armory Dwelling No. 25 "with enough of its lot to give a breadth of ten (10) rods on High Street" to the Freedmen's Bureau for educational purposes until the property was disposed of by congressional action.[21]

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[19]O.B.C. [Cheney] to Bro [Brackett], 17 April 1867 and 20 April 1867, Park Reel 113, Flash 1; Spirit of Jefferson, 10 December 1867, p. 2, col. 7. Late in 1867, the attorney general ruled the government had absolute possession.

[20]N.C. Brackett to John Kimball, 7 May 1867, R.G. 105, M1056, National Archives Roll 10, Frame 1004, Unregistered Letters.

[21]O.O. Howard to Hon. E.M. Stanton, 16 January 1868, R.G. 156, Entry 21, File 679 W.D. (1869), National Archives.

Stanton approved Howard's request, and Daniel Young, local Ordnance Department agent, transferred the property to the Freedmen's Bureau in February 1868. Young did not, however, include the property between Fillmore Street and High Street (Washington Street) with Armory Dwelling No. 25. Instead, he created a lot that extended thirty feet east and south of the house, 92 3/4 feet west of it, and had a 165-foot frontage on Fillmore Street. According to Young, Fillmore Street west of McDowell Street was unopened, but Jackson Street was partially open and in use at that time.[22]

On December 15, 1868, the United States Congress passed legislation authorizing the Secretary of War to sell government holdings at Harpers Ferry. This legislation also authorized and directed the Secretary of War to deed the four Camp Hill buildings previously assigned to the Freedmen's Bureau to Storer College. With regard to Armory Dwelling No. 25, this legislation specified a lot exactly the same as that Oliver Howard had requested in January 1868, namely a lot with a ten-rod breadth on High Street (Washington Street).[23] Because the lines of the survey the federal government had commissioned in 1852 had been erased during the Civil War, a new survey was prepared by S. Howell Brown in 1869. In March 1869, Brown sent Young a map showing his survey for Armory Dwelling No. 25. In meeting the requirements of the 1868 congressional legislation, Brown had laid out a lot fronting on the south side of Washington Street. In order to create a rectangular lot around the house, this lot extended ten rods west from a point located at approximately the eastern corner of Jackson Street. But because all of Jackson Street between Fillmore and Washington streets would lie within this lot, Brown outlined an alternative

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[22]D.J. Young to Bvt. Gen. A.B. Dyer, 17 February 1868, and accompanying map, R.G. 156, Entry 21, File 679 W.D. (1869), National Archives.

[23]Act providing for the sale of the lands, tenements, and water privileges belonging to the United States at and near Harper's Ferry, in the county of Jefferson, West Virginia, copy in R.G. 156, Entry 21, File 679 W.D. (1869), National Archives.

that would not give Storer College any property along Washington Street. By this plan, the lot assigned to Armory Dwelling No. 25 would have a fourteen-pole frontage on the south side of Fillmore Street instead. Young forwarded Brown's letter and map to his superiors with a recommendation that the alternative plan be adopted.[24]

Nathan Brackett argued in favor of frontage on Washington Street and had S. Howell Brown prepare a survey reflecting that position in April 1869. Brown's survey for Storer College again reflects an eastern boundary including only a small portion of land east of Jackson Street, but a month later Oliver Howard of the Freedmen's Bureau informed Secretary of War J. A. Rawlings that the college trustees wanted a ten-rod wide lot in which Armory Dwelling No. 25 would be "at the middle point of an east & west line parallel to Fillmore St."[25] In the end, Storer College did receive property extending north to Washington Street. With regard to land on the west side of Jackson Street, on December 15, 1869, the United States deeded Storer College a lot running seventy and one-half feet along Washington Street and Fillmore Street west of Jackson Street.[26]

No documentation of use of this lot over the next two decades has been found. The earliest indication of possible use is a May 1887 report in the Pioneer Press that a "beautiful monument" would be erected to the memory of the Reverend Alexander Morrell, who had established the Freewill Baptist Church in Harpers Ferry in 1867.[27] Morrell died December 24, 1885 and was

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[24]D.J. Young to Bvt. Lt. Col. T.J. Treadwell, 24 February 1869 and 18 March 1869; S. Howell Brown to Capt. Daniel J. Young, 16 March 1869, and accompanying map, R.G. 156, Entry 21, File 679 W.D. (1869), National Archives.

[25]N.C. Brackett to Mr. Alvord, 17 April 1869; Plat of S. Howell Brown, 14 April 1869; O.O. Howard to Hon J.A. Rawlings, May 1869, all in R.G. 156, Entry 21, File 679 W.D. (1869).

[26]W.W. Belknap to Storer College, 15 December 1869, Deed Book 4, p. 575.

[27]Pioneer Press, May 1887, p. 2, col. 3.



Figure 2. Map of Harpers Ferry, 1869, by S. Howell Brown.

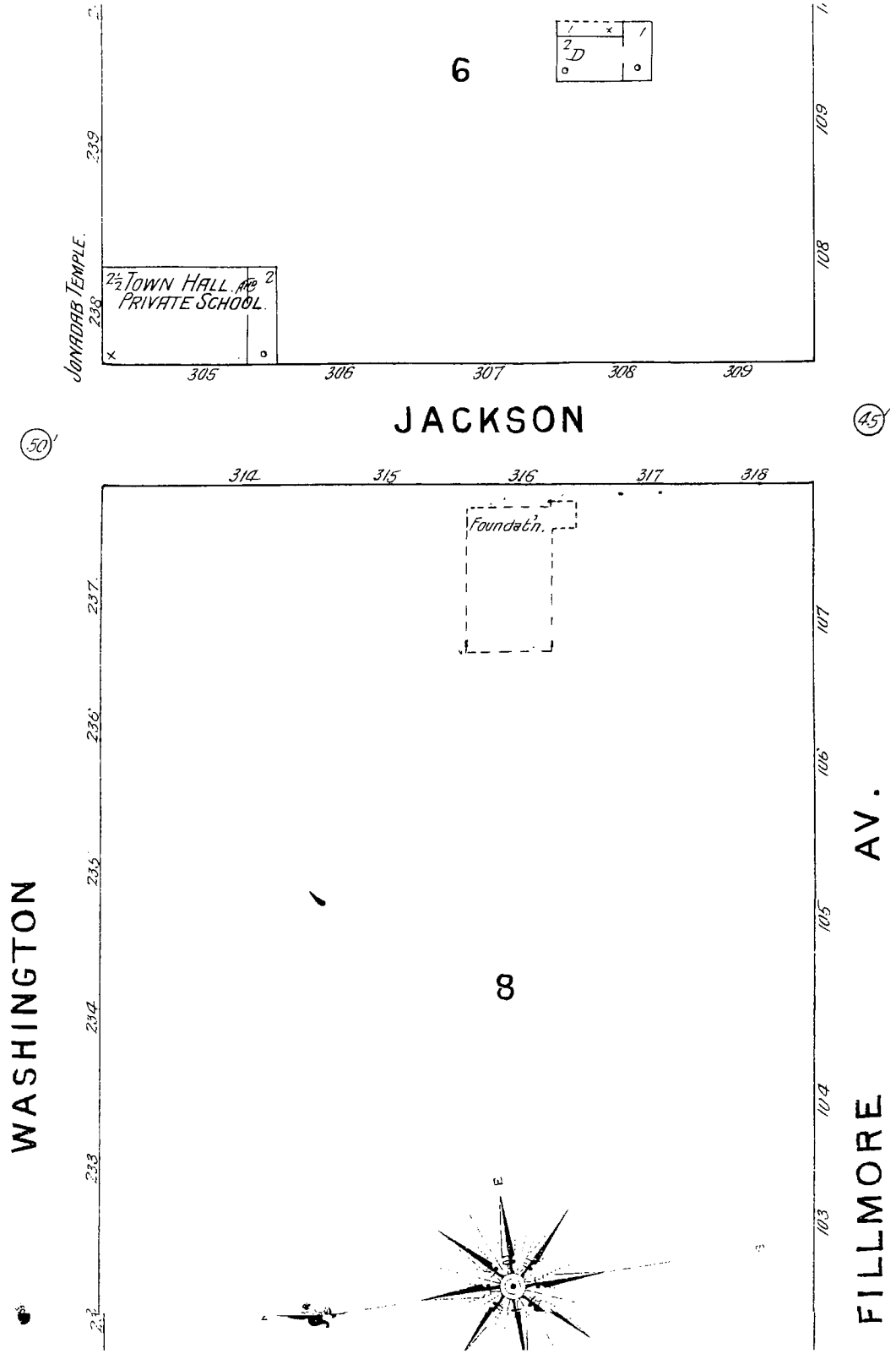


Figure 3. Sanborn Map, 1894.

buried in Harpers Ferry. The following February the college Board of Trustees passed a resolution that "some fitting memorial of his high christian character & his invaluable services be erected in around [*sic*] the college buildings."[28] The Morrell monument was granite, "the central stone being of dark Quincy granite highly polished and the base and cap stones of granite of a lighter shade." The monument was paid for through donations and was dedicated May 30, 1887 during Storer College commencement exercises. It has yet to be determined if the current location of the Morrell monument in the church yard south of the church is its original location. A statement made by the author of the "Supplementary Notes" in Kate Anthony's historical sketch of Storer College, published in 1891, that Morrell's monument stood "in front of the Lockwood" suggests it was not then standing in the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church yard.[29]

In the Summer of 1887, the year the Morrell monument was created, the Reverend Jared Arter, a graduate of Storer College, became pastor of the Freewill Baptist Church at Harpers Ferry and a member of the college faculty. During his pastorate, construction of the church building at Harpers Ferry began.[30] The foundation of the building was laid, and the cornerstone of the church building was set Sunday September 29, 1889, during the meeting of the General Conference of Free Baptists at Harpers Ferry. In February 1890, Nathan Brackett, in his capacity as Storer College treasurer, granted the church trustees a lot (70 1/2 feet wide and about 154 feet long) between Jackson Street and Lot No. 14, Block JJ, "on which said church has commenced its meeting house." The deed stipulated that the property was intended "for the sole use and benefit of the religious congregation known as the F. B. Church of Harpers Ferry W. Va. for the

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[28]Anthony, p. 22; Storer College Book No. 1 (Trustee Minutes) 1867-1898, p. 79, Park Reel 131.

[29]Anthony, p. 22; Pioneer Press, June 1887, p. 3, col. 3.

[30]Jared Maurice Arter, Echoes from a Pioneer Life (Atlanta, GA: A.B. Caldwell Publishing Co., 1922), p. 26-7.

erection of a place of worship and a residence for their pastor and for no other purpose."[31]

The church building apparently progressed no farther than the foundation for several years, and the 1894 Sanborn Map shows only the foundation in place. (See Figure 3) In December 1893, the Reverend Ethnan W. Porter, a native of Nova Scotia, came to Harpers Ferry to assume charge of the Freewill Baptist Church. Later he taught at Storer College in the newly-formed biblical literature department.[32]

Porter concluded the division of time, energy, and resources between the college and the church hindered development of the church. "A church needs a building and facilities," Porter asserted. "It must conduct a social work, devotional exercises, and public services. The membership must be trained in all of these departments." Porter spoke to the congregation and found them aware of the need but lacking in the will. According to Porter, the only prayer meetings were those held at the college. No public Sunday services were held except those occasionally held during the school year in the college chapel. With the college renting out campus buildings for summer boarding, the church had no regular place of worship for four months a year. The situation produced a "religious demoralization" of church members and led many young members to transfer to other churches. Porter argued that a separate church building would benefit the college as well, since the "larger success" of the school depended upon a "strong and vigorous church."[33]

According to Porter, the building committee wanted as much of the work on the church

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[31]Spirit of Jefferson, 24 September 1889, p. 3, col. 3; N.C. Brackett to Wm. B. Hill et al, trustees, 1 February 1890, "A Journal on the work at Harpers Ferry and Among the Churches in West Va. 1894," p. 55, Park Reel 131, Flash 9. This deed is recorded in the Jefferson County courthouse in Deed Book 76, p. 179.

[32]Rev. G.A. Burgess and Rev. J.T. Ward, Free Baptist Cyclopaedia (Free Baptist Cyclopaedia Co., 1889), p. 538.

[33]"A Journal on the work at Harpers Ferry and Among the Churches in West Va. 1894," pp. 1-4, Park Reel 131, Flash 9.

as possible done by blacks, apparently meaning students and church members. Particularly with respect to the masonry work, Porter found this arrangement unsatisfactory and so employed a "good" black mason for that work. He also found it difficult to construct the church on "so poor a foundation--in material & workmanship" as was done before he arrived. Porter claimed he was hampered by several other circumstances as well: a General Conference policy restricting fund raising, problems with the accounting of funds raised prior to his arrival, the division of his time between church and school responsibilities, difficulties in getting materials up the hill and working "in labor subscriptions and old bills to help the poor to have some share in the work and building," and the necessity of acquiring materials in small lots due to the lack of funds with which to buy in larger quantities and a policy to not incur any debt.[34]

Nevertheless, work on the church building moved forward after Porter arrived. In March 1894, the President and faculty of Storer College agreed to give "sanction to and material aid" for construction of the Freewill Baptist church building "according to the plan and specifications as agreed upon by its members, official boards and a duly appointed building committee." The college further agreed that the faculty would establish requirements for student attendance at church services similar to the existing requirements for chapel services at the college and that college services would be scheduled so as not to conflict with those at the church. The college and the Harpers Ferry Freewill Baptist Church agreed to select and support the church pastor together.[35]

By December 1894, the church walls were "well on the way towards completion," but

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[34]Book of Financial Statements concerning Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, pp. 26-8, Park Reel 131, Flash 9.

[35]Agreement between the President and Faculty of Storer College and the Harpers Ferry Freewill Baptist Church, 30 March 1894, Park Reel 131, Flash 11.

Porter solicited additional contributions from readers of the Morning Star. A clipping accompanying Porter's letter to the Star reported contributions in excess of $400. The work had been delayed during the Summer of 1894 but resumed from November 1894 until winter began. The building committee was committed to not going into debt to complete the church; therefore, work progressed only to the extent funds allowed. As of March 1895, Porter hoped the building would be sufficiently complete before summer that it could be used during the boarding season when college buildings were not available for worship services.[36]

Money remained a problem, but in 1895 and 1896 sufficient conditional funds became available for the building project. In May 1895, the executors of the estate of Silas Curtis offered $500 toward construction of the church building upon certain conditions. The executors stipulated that the building be named the "Curtis Freewill Baptist Church." Should the church cease to function, the $500 would be "legally secured to the Freewill Baptist denomination" for the benefit of black Freewill Baptists in West Virginia or Virginia. In June, John Robinson, secretary of the church Board of Trustees, and E. W. Porter, pastor, informed the Curtis estate executors that the church trustees accepted these conditions.[37] To provide "legal assurance" of their commitment to these conditions, on July 3, 1895, church trustees Thomas S. Lovett, William B. Hill, John H. Robinson, Henry H. Winters, Bacon Dixon, Hamilton Hatter, and Alexander Freeman placed the church land and improvements in trust with Arthur Given, treasurer of the General Conference of Free Baptists. Givens was authorized to sell the property only if the church were "abandoned as church property" and the conditions of the Curtis gift were "violated." A year later, to secure

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[36]"A Journal on the work at Harpers Ferry and Among the Churches in West Va. 1894," pp. 6-8, 17, Park Reel 131, Flash 9.

[37]Conditions of M.B. Smith and J. Howard Gruby Executors of Estate of Rev. Silas Curtis, 29 May 1895, and Resolution of the Board of Trustees and Building Committee of Curtis Freewill Baptist Church of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, 10 June 1895, Park Reel 131, Flash 11.

an additional $300 from the Curtis estate, $400 from the General Conference, $200 from Miss Susan Wyman of Boston, Massachusetts, $100 from Deacon Jesse Blake of Tewkesbury, Massachusetts, $100 from B. J. Cole of Lakeport, New Hampshire, and $1,400 from unnamed persons, the trustees signed another deed of trust to the same effect.[38]

With the money provided from these donors, as well as money, gifts, and labor provided by members of the local congregation worth nearly $1,000, the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church was finally completed and was dedicated May 27, 1896. The church (roughly 37 by 58 feet in size) was constructed of brick, perhaps obtained from Frederick Brick Company, upon a stone basement. The building had a slate roof and gable. At the southern corner, a square tower housing the building's main entrance was constructed. Stone steps given by Scott Lightner, Nathan Brackett's brother-in-law, led to the entrance. The interior wood work was Alabama pine and poplar; most of this work was done by students of Storer College carpentry shop under the supervision of Hamilton Hatter, a church trustee and professor at the college. In addition to the audience room (sanctuary) on the main floor, the building contained vestry or work rooms, where Nathan Brackett's wife Louise had already begun to teach sewing classes and where cooking classes were planned for the future, and a Sunday School and lecture room in the basement.[39]

The three large windows in the eastern wall of the main floor were given as memorials to the Reverend Alexander Morrell, the Reverend Joseph Veney, and Deacon Franklin. Morrell, of course, established the Harpers Ferry Freewill Baptist Church in 1867. Veney was a Storer College graduate and minister at Berryville, Virginia, and Providence, Rhode Island. Deacon

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[38]Deed of Trust, T.S. Lovett et al to Arthur Given, 3 July 1895, and Same to Same, 1 June 1896, Box 46, Folder "Deed-Curtis Baptist Church 1950," A&M 1322, WVU. These two deeds of trust are recorded in the courthouse in Deed Book 79, p. 266 and Deed Book 81, p. 373 respectively.

[39]"A Journal on the work at Harpers Ferry and Among the Churches in West Va. 1894," pp. 65-6, 74, and Book of Financial Statement concerning Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, p. 30, Park Reel 131, Flash 9; Acct. of money Recd. and paid on the building of Harpers Ferry F.B. Church by E.W. Porter, 1894," pp. 48 and unnumbered pages following 49, Park Reel 131, Flash 11.

Franklin probably was Albert Franklin, who superintended boys in Lincoln Hall for several years. The windows along the north and south sides were provided almost exclusively by young people's societies of New England Freewill Baptist congregations (Amesbury, Lynn, and Lowell, Massachusetts; Concord, New Hampshire; Bangor, Portland, and Lewiston, Maine; and Providence, Rhode Island), except one given by the Harpers Ferry Christian Endeavor Society. Some or all of these windows may have come from Carlisle Pope and Company whom Porter paid $163.70 for windows.[40]

Porter left soon after the church was completed. The Reverend Ernest Osgood served as pastor of the church while he was principal of Storer College (1897 to 1899). In May 1898, the college Board of Trustees approved continuance of this joint duty only if the church employed an assistant who would undertake much of the minister's work. According to the college catalog for 1897 to 1898, three services were held in the church on Sundays, and a prayer meeting was held on Wednesday evenings. College students were required to attend two Sunday services, although they were not required to worship at the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church per se. Similar statements regarding attendance at church services continued to appear in college catalogs until the 1940s.[41]

With respect to physical changes or improvements to the building, only limited information is available. Sanborn Maps for 1902 and 1907 (Figure 6 and Figure 7) indicate that the building was heated by stoves and lighted by oil-burning fixtures. In March of the latter year, the Storer Record indicated the building had received electric lights at the beginning of the year "through the generosity" of the Harpers Ferry Electric Light Company. "Two fine wood posts at either side

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[40]"A Journal on the work at Harpers Ferry and Among the Churches in West Va. 1894," pp. 65-6, Acct. of money Recd. and paid on the building of Harpers Ferry F.B. Church by E.W. Porter, 1894," unnumbered pages following 49, Park Reel 131, Flash 11; Burgess and Ward, p. 663; Robertson, "Traditions and Memories," p. 20, Storer College Binder 1936-1939.

[41]Trustees Minute Book 1898-1913, p. 18, Park Reel 130; Catalogue of Storer College 1897-98, p. 29, Park Reel 128, Flash "Storer College Bulletins"; Storer College Bulletin 1944-45 Announcements 1945-46, p. 20, Park Reel 126, Flash 1.

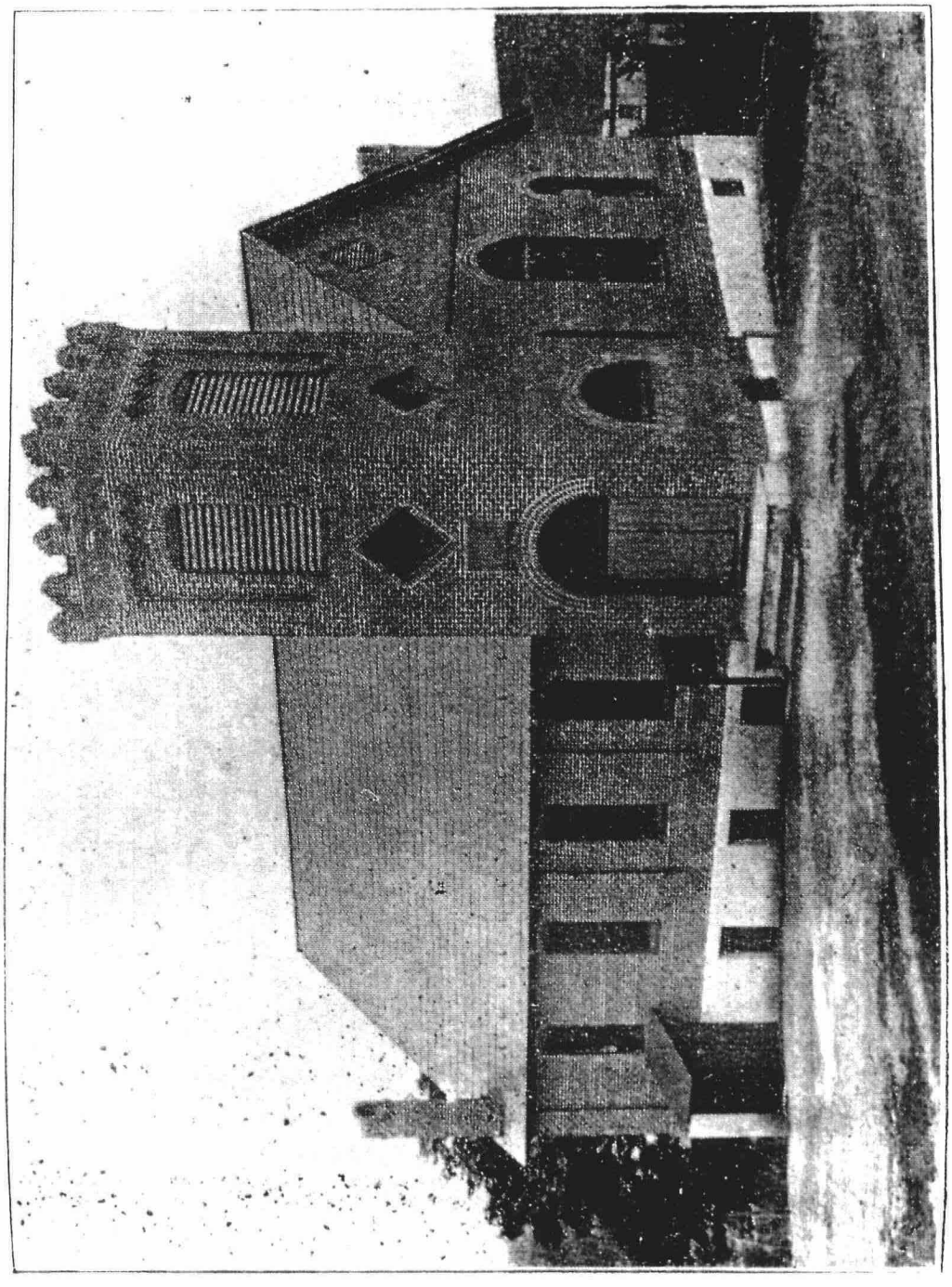


Figure 4. HF-576. The south and east sides of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, circa 1897.

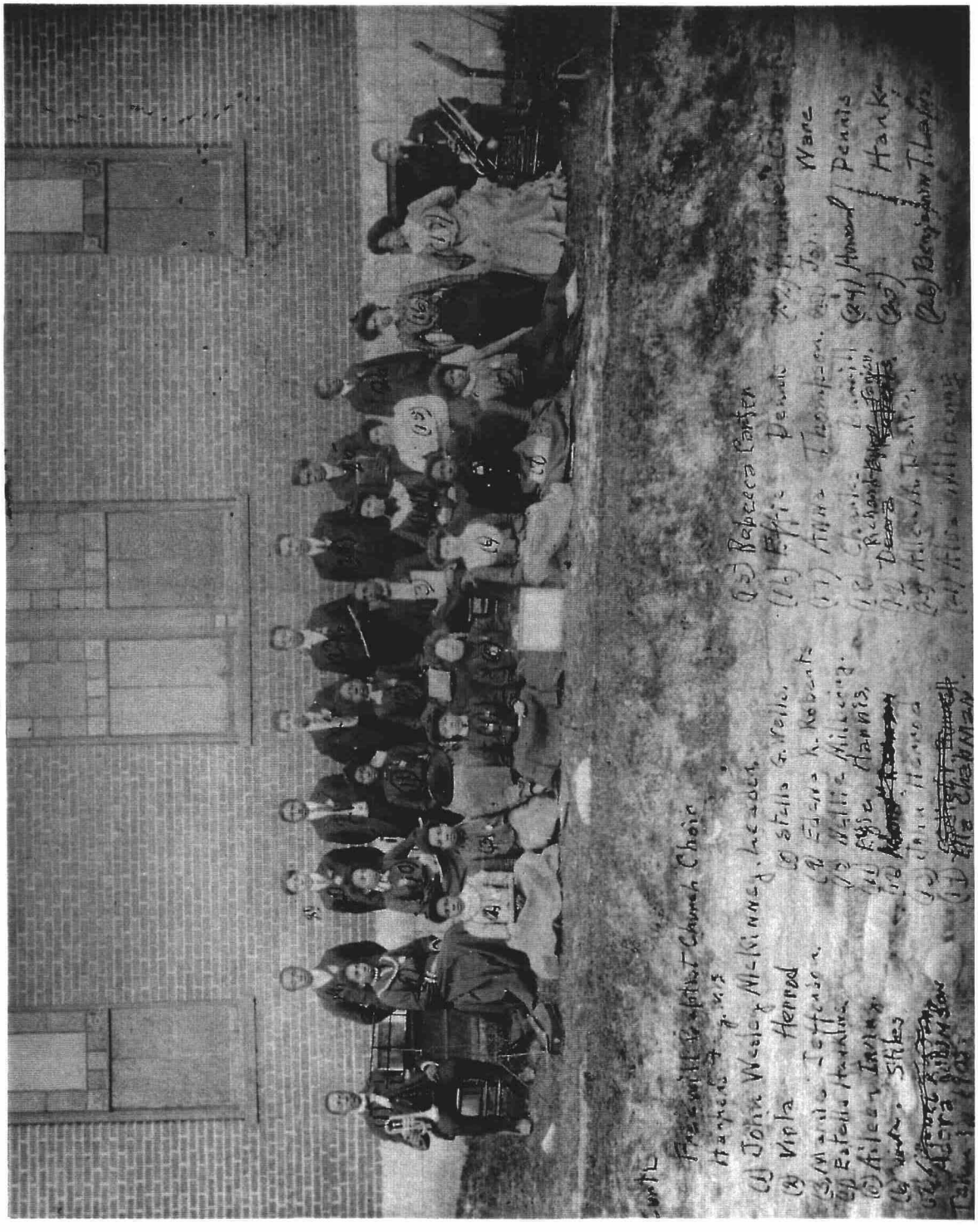


Figure 5. HF-1126. This photograph of the Freewill Baptist Church Choir in 1903 shows the memorial windows on the east side of the church.

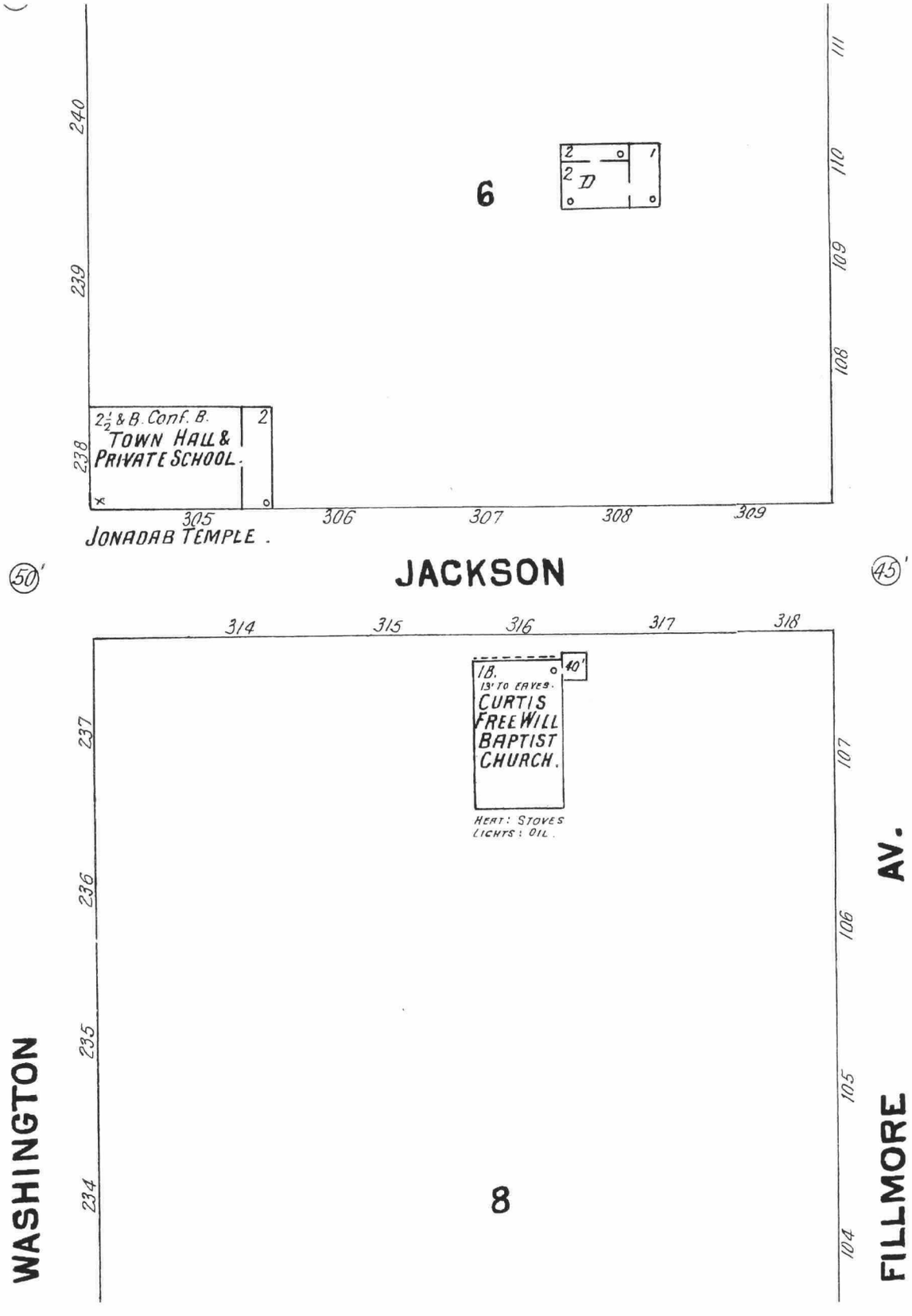


Figure 6. Sanborn Map, 1902.

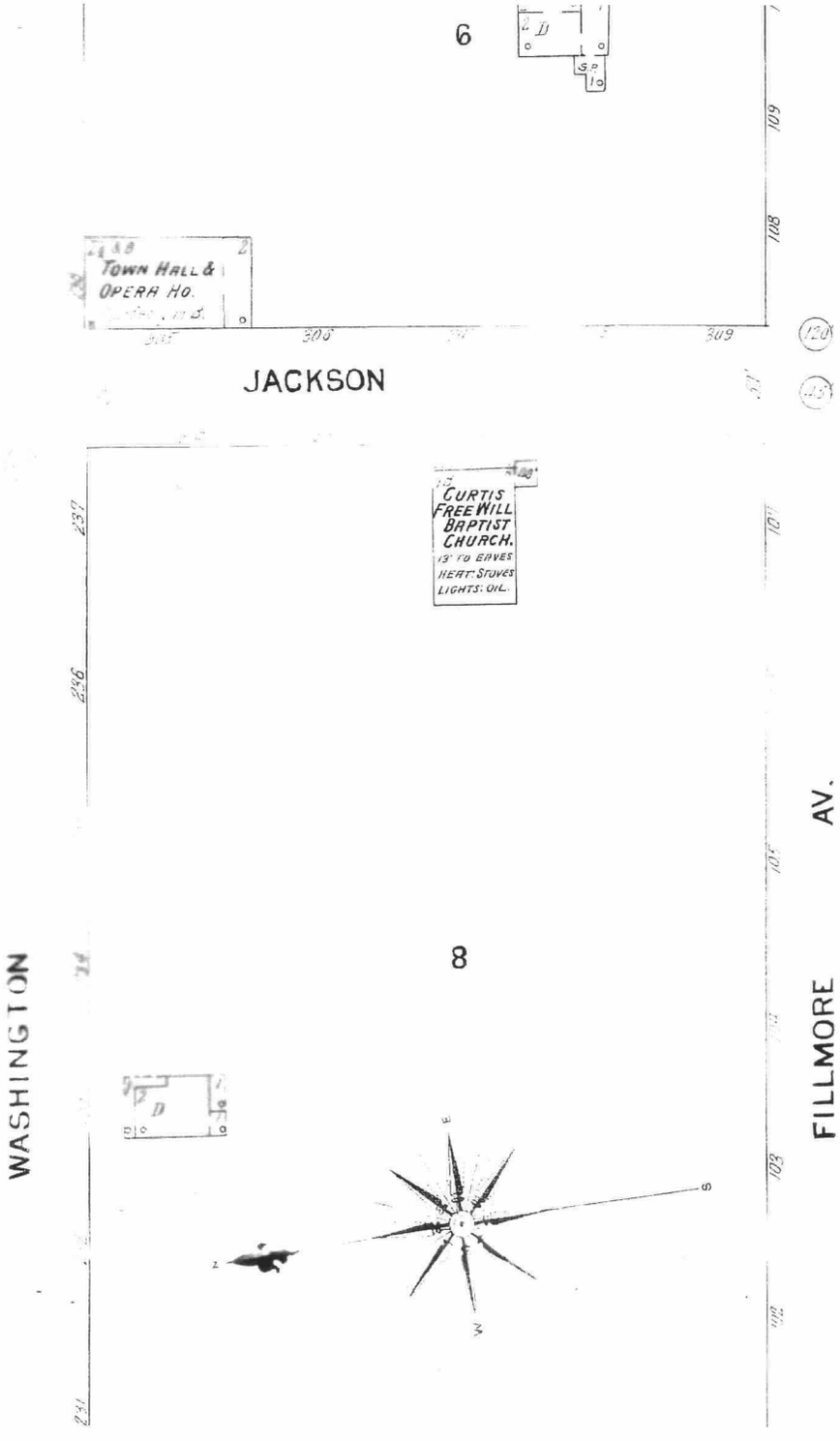


Figure 7. Sanborn Map, 1907.

of the pulpit supporting fine groundglass lights" were given to the church by J. W. McKinney who made them in the college industrial building.[42]

In 1908, an organ was given to Storer College. The executive committee voted to place it in the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church if the college and the church executed a written contract "allowing the church to use the organ for Sabbath and other religious services and the College to have the right to use the church for organ practice for instruction of students and for organ recitals." Furthermore, should either party wish to terminate the agreement, the college reserved the right to remove the organ.[43] For over two years, however, the pipe organ stood "unbuilt" in the church because there were no funds for its rebuilding. Nor could the college find anyone capable of doing the work. Finally, work commenced in the Spring of 1911, and the following year, college president Henry McDonald commented how music at the college church had improved life at the school.[44] As the college catalog for 1914-15 indicates the organ came from "Rhode Island friends," it likely is the same organ McDonald later recalled came to Harpers Ferry from the Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Free Baptist Church.[45]

According to McDonald, the arrangement executed in the 1890s between the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, Storer College, and the General Conference of Free Baptists, whereby the college deeded the property to the church and the General Conference treasurer became trustee for most of the funds donated for the church building, left the college with "no hold upon or

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[42]Storer Record, March 1907, p. 2, col. 3, Park Reel 122, Flash 1.

[43]Trustees Minute Book 1898-1913, p. 186, Park Reel 130.

[44]Storer Record, May 1911, p. 3, col. 2, Park Reel 122, Flash 4; May 1912, p. 1, col. 2, Park Reel 122, Flash 5.

[45]Catalogue of Storer College 1914-15, p. 22, Park Reel 128, Flash "Storer College Bulletins"; Henry T. McDonald, Notes on Organ in Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, 26 July 1944, Storer College Binder General Correspondence.

control over the church" despite the fact the church was generally seen as part of the college.[46] In 1913, Alfred Williams Anthony suggested to church trustee H. H. Winter that the best way for the church to protect itself in light of denominational changes--possibly meaning the union of Freewill Baptists and Baptists in 1911--would be to authorize the transfer of title to Storer College. "The church really exists because of the college, was created by the college, and owes its life and existence now to the college," Anthony argued.[47] At its meeting in July 1913, the General Conference authorized its president and treasurer to transfer conference interest in the church property to Storer College, but there evidently was a snag with respect to changing trusteeship without court permission. No resolution of this matter occurred at this time.[48]

Equally troubling for the church was the lack of a regular pastor. The Storer Sentinel for 1909-10 reported that Henry McDonald and teachers William Saunders and Mrs. Alice Metcalf, "with the assistance of an occassional [*sic*] visiting minister," conducted Sunday evening services in the Freewill Baptist Church.[49] McDonald found this arrangement unacceptable and in 1916 solicited the American Baptist Home Mission Society for appointment of a minister to the college church. A regular minister would relieve McDonald and the teachers of this "very great burden." According to McDonald, with a black population he estimated at 450, nearly half of whom were Baptist, the area offered much opportunity for denominational service. With regard to the black Baptist church connected to Storer, students and teachers attended services there, but the active membership was small due to the lack of a regular pastor and the fact that when school

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[46][Henry McDonald] to Rev. John S. Stump, 1 May 1921, Box 62, Folder 1921, A&M 1322, West Virginia University (WVU).

[47]Alfred Wms. Anthony to H.H. Winter, 6 June 1913, Reel 131, Flash 10.

[48]True copy of vote at meeting of the General Conference of Free Baptists, 15 July 1913, and Alfred Wms. Anthony to President McDonald, 19 August 1913, Park Reel 131, Flash 10.

[49]Storer Sentinel 1909-10, Park Reel 128, Flash "Storer College Bulletins."

was not in session "the work in large measure ceases."[50]

The church managed to get its own minister in the Fall of 1916, when the Reverend Jared Arter returned to the church after an absence of twenty-five years. The church agreed to pay Arter $50 a month, a sum McDonald indicated would largely have to come from college teachers and students as the local membership only numbered about twenty. McDonald hoped the Home Mission Society might assist with Arter's salary.[51] The Home Mission Society may not have responded favorably to this request, as in 1919-1920 the society paid none of his salary.[52]

After Arter assumed charge of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, perhaps already more commonly known as the Curtis Memorial Church, he became affiliated with Storer College. Arter conducted Bible training at the college and was an assistant superintendent at the boy's dormitory (first Lincoln and later Myrtle halls). He evidently continued this joint activity until 1920, a year after the college Board of Trustees voted that the executive committee consider "the separation of the pastor of the church from the disciplinary duties of Myrtle Hall and the Campus." Arter continued as pastor of the church and the student body, however, until his resignation effective October 9, 1921.[53] According to Arter's autobiography, when he left,

> the church had been brought to a status of activity greater than ever before, was paying larger dues, and raising more money for support of pastor and support of the church-work than ever before in its history, and was receiving greater recognition as an independent body both by the school and the other churches of the community than ever before.[54]

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[50][Henry McDonald] to Dr. Henry L. Morehouse, 11 July 1916, A&M 1322, Box 1, Folder "1916," Storer College Collection, WVU.

[51][Henry McDonald] to Dr. Henry L. Morehouse, 10 November 1916, A&M 1322, Box 62, Folder 1916-1917, WVU.

[52]Statement of Salaries for 1919-1920, Park Reel 131, Flash 11.

[53]Arter, pp. 64, 67-8; Trustees Minute Book 1913-1944, p. 74, Park Reel 130.

[54]Arter, p. 68.

Despite Arter's optimistic view of the condition of the Curtis Church, there is no indication the church was served by a regular pastor after Arter's departure. In 1934, Henry McDonald informed the Board of Trustees that "the whole burden of speaking on Sundays falls on Prof. Saunders and myself."[55] The church technically still operated independently of the college but in reality looked to the college for both worship leaders and worshipers.

In January 1930, the Storer Record noted it had been "several years" since any work was done on the church. Recently, however, the church Board had fixed the interior of the building by painting and oiling walls, seats, pulpit and choir loft in the sanctuary; the prayer meeting room similarly was improved. All this work was done by Mr. Willis, who also was given a contract for painting the exterior woodwork. The college YMCA provided new carpet in the sanctuary. Some $400 was expended on these improvements.[56] In 1943, the Board of Trustees' Committee on Buildings recommended repairing the fence around the college church. No record of when this fence was erected has been found, but it is visible in a photograph in a 1945 college catalog.[57]

In the Fall of 1945, because Storer College provided the programs and services for the Curtis Memorial Church and because college students and personnel "largely constitute the congregation" of the church, the treasurer and acting treasurer of the Curtis Memorial Church appointed the college "to assume the full financial responsibility of the Church until further notice." They surrendered funds totalling $222.85 to the college.[58]

Title to the property on which the church stood remained a problem, however. Although

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[55]Trustees Minute Book 1913-1944, p. 291, Park Reel 130.

[56]Storer Record, January 1930, p. 3, col. 2; Park Reel 122, Flash 30; Trustees Minute Book 1913-1944, p. 231, Park Reel 130.

[57]Minutes for May 1943, Trustees Minute Book 1913-1944, following p. 347, Park Reel 130; Storer College Bulletin 1944-45 Announcements 1945-46, p. 17, Park Reel 126, Flash 1.

[58]Form of Agreement (Curtis Memorial Church), October and November 1945, Box 23, Folder "Curtis Memorial Church," A&M 1322, WVU.

the General Conference of Free Baptists had authorized the transfer of title to the college in 1913, no transfer took place. The Storer College executive committee voted in August 1946 to "initiate proceedings to secure a legal title" to the church because "it has seemed to the present administration that Storer has no legal control over this property."[59] In 1951, Harry Myers, secretary of the General Conference informed Henry McDonald he had tried "for the last three or four years" to get someone at Storer College to go to the Jefferson County courthouse and find out if the property had ever been deeded back to the college. Myers finally received some information from Leroy Johnson, acting president of Storer College: church trustee H. H. Winters had informed Johnson that the church was deeded to its trustees and that if the church ever ceased functioning as a church, the money invested in it would go for churches in the Shenandoah Valley. Rather horrified, Johnson had asked, "Does this sound correct? If so how can we ever get a deed for the college?"[60]

In the end, the General Conference concluded it could deed the property to Storer College for the following reasons: the college had deeded the property to the Freewill Baptist Church solely for church use, the congregation had "ceased to hold religious meetings in said building and disbanded" and therefore title devolved to the General Conference, the church had been in use "for some time . . . in conjunction with Storer College as a place for worship" and would continue so under college ownership, and the 1895 and 1896 deeds of trust had been made in favor of the General Conference. Accordingly, the General Conference of Free Baptists deeded the southern portion of the lot on the west side of Jackson Street between Fillmore and Washington streets with

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[59]Richard I. McKinney to Dr. Harry S. Myers, 7 September 1946, Park Reel 131, Flash 10.

[60]Harry S. Myers to Dr. H.T. McDonald, 17 April 1951, and H.H. Winters to Mr. Johnson, 26 January 1951, Park Reel 131, Flash 10.

the church building to Storer College on January 16, 1952.[61]

Storer College closed its doors in 1955. Five years later, the college Board of Trustees approved selling the college real estate to the United States, Congress having approved addition of the property to Harpers Ferry National Monument and the National Park Service having the intention of using the college buildings for a training school. Because Congress failed to appropriate money for this purpose in 1960, however, it was not until 1962 that the Secretary of the Interior signed a declaration of taking to that effect.[62]

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[61]General Conference of Free Baptists to the President and Trustees of Storer College, 16 January 1952, Box 46, Folder "Deed--Curtis Baptist Church 1950," A&M 1322, WVU. This deed is recorded in the courthouse in Deed Book 186, p. 438.

[62]Minutes of Board of Trustees, 12 April 1960, and Clarence W. Crawford to Board of Trustees of Storer College, 10 March 1961, Reel 124, Flash 6; Public Law 86-655, 86th Congress, S. 2674, 14 July 1960; Declaration of Taking, United States vs. President and Trustees of Storer College et al, 28 August 1962, Deed Book 256, p. 55.

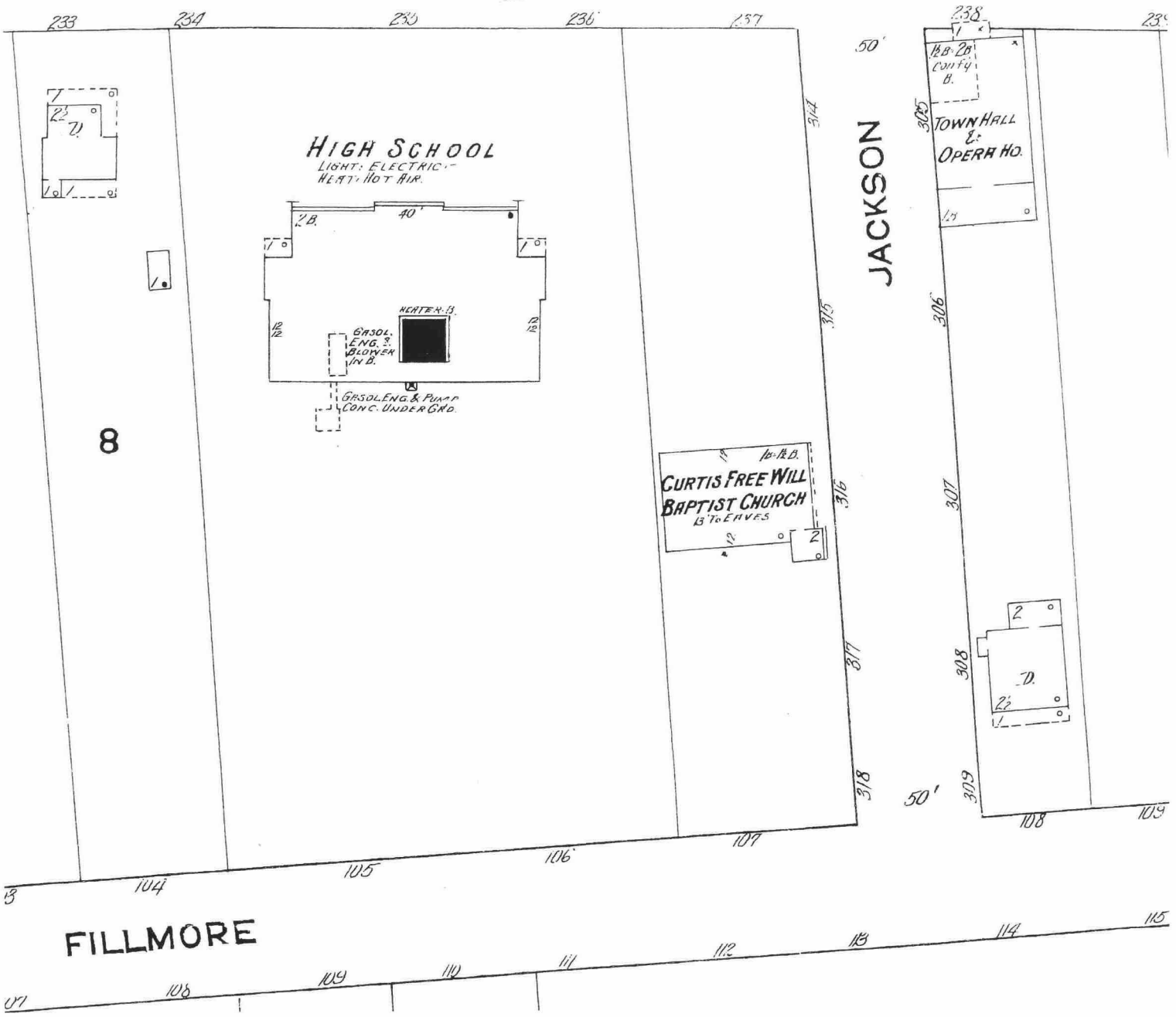


Figure 8. Sanborn Map, 1912.

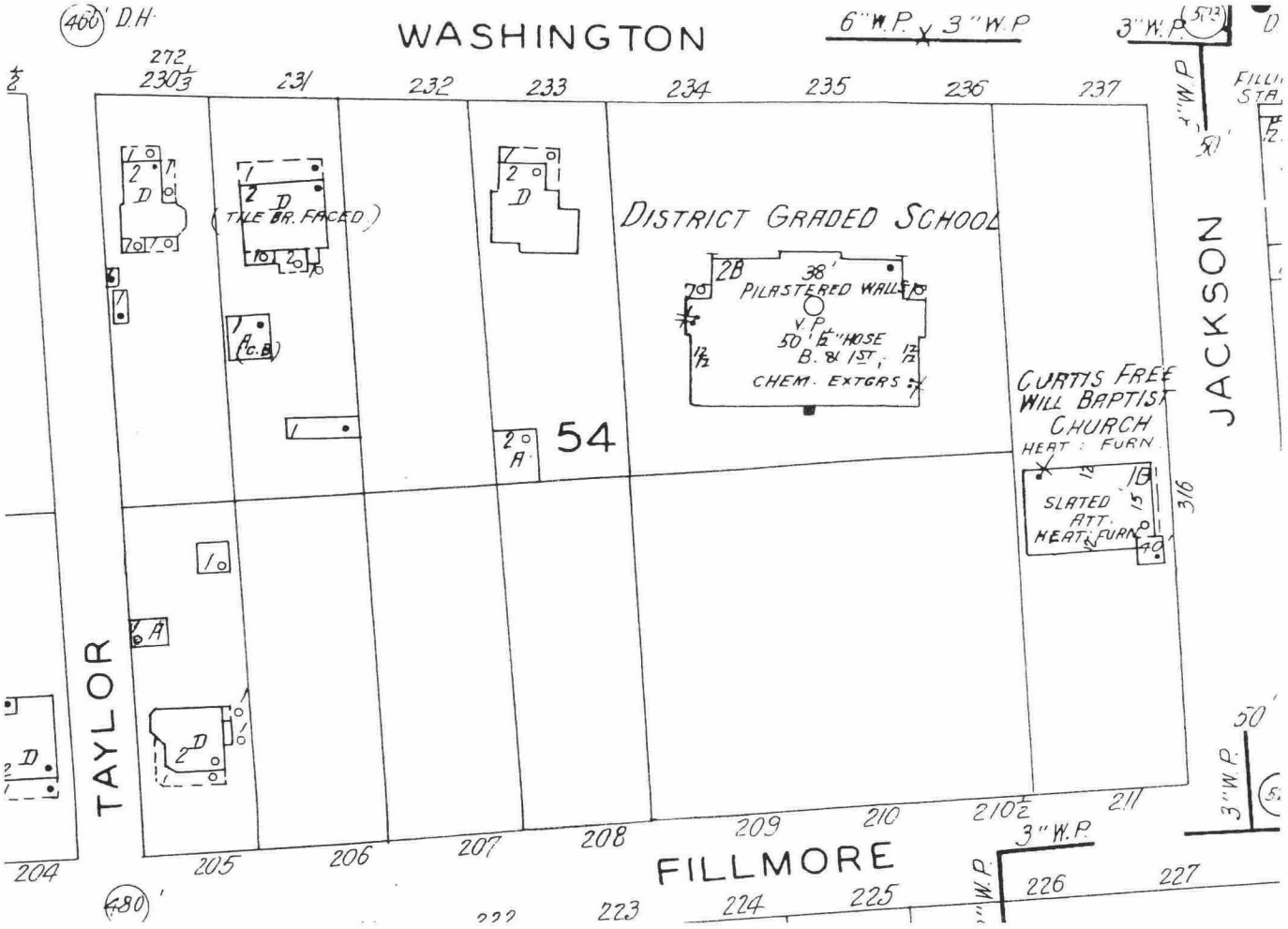


Figure 9. Sanborn Map, 1933.

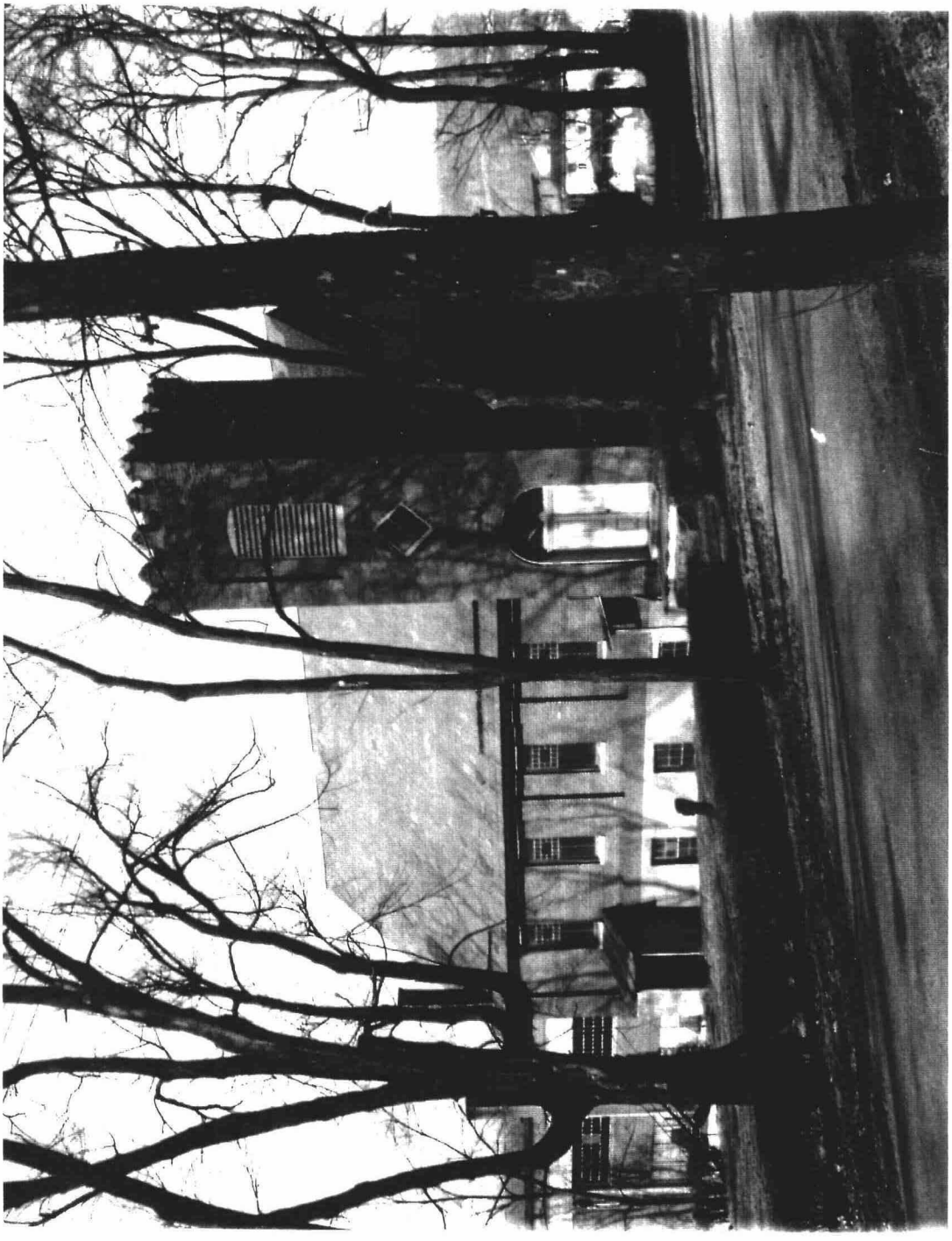


Figure 10. NHF-3989. In this circa 1950s view of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, only the grounds appear changed from the 1890s view in HF-576.

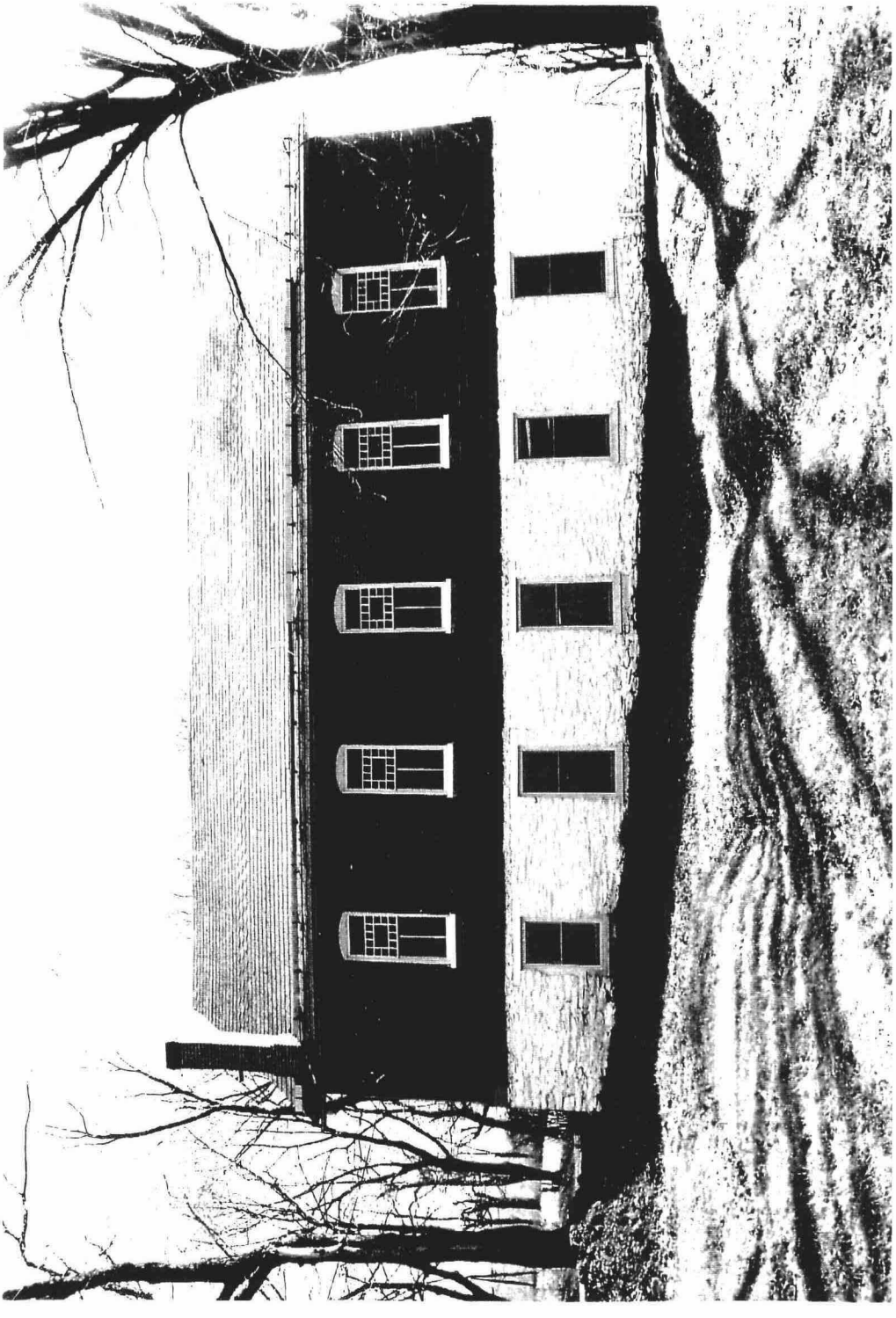


Figure 11. NHF-3719. The north side of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church in 1978.

BUILDING HISTORIES (NPS OWNERSHIP)

BUILDING: Curtis Freewill Baptist Church

HAFE #: 75

LCS #: 03870

HISTORY

1976		painted exterior [List/Buildings Painted/Maintenance]
1977	March or April	work begun, including the following work: insulating, carpeting, and installing new heating and cooling unit. [Note-11/17/77/Baptist Church Bldg. No. 75/Maintenance]
1977	September	condition: good [Inventory of Property-9/30/77/Inventory of Property/Drawer 5]
1977	November 10	recently corrected southside gutter problem; removing and replanting hedge along Jackson Street to soon be begun by YAC [Del-Colle Memorandum-11/10/77/Baptist Church Bldg. No. 75/Maintenance]
1978		painted interior [List/Buildings Painted/Maintenance]
1979	December 3	installation of the sewer line completed by Hampshire Excavating of Harpers Ferry, WV at a cost of $1,170 [Letter of Acceptance-12/6/79;Lump Sum Contract-12/6/79/79 Contract-IRB 3-9-180 79 Sewer Hookup 7 Buildings 56, 57, 82, 58, 70, and 48/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1980	April 1	realigning and repairing of the gutters and downspouts begun by Quality Roofing and Sheet Metal of Washington, D.C. [Voucher-7/25/80;Completion Report-7/28/80/CX 3000-0-0041 Gutter and Dwnspts.-Complete/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1980	June 13	realigning and repairing of the gutters and downspouts completed by Quality Roofing and Sheet Metal of Washington, D.C. at a cost of $8,893, including similar work done on Nos. 33, 34, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, and 69 [Letter of Acceptance-7/2/80;Voucher-7/25/80/"79" Gutters, Downspouts 3-0-41/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1981	February 28	painted entranceway and installed handrail on southwest entrance [Job Order-12/2/80/Completd 10-577/Maintenance 2]
1983	January 31	installation of baseboard heaters and light fixtures begun by Sam Gonzales, Inc., of Springfield, VA [Lump Sum Contract-8/25/83/CX-

		3000-2-0041 WD-4 Baseboard Heaters/Light Baptist Church/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1983	March 1	installation of baseboard heaters and light fixtures completed at a cost of $13,081 [Lump Sum Contract-8/25/83/;Letter of Acceptance-8/22/83/CX-3000-2-0041 WD-4 Baseboard Heaters/Light Baptist Church/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1983	March 22	issued job order to construct an entrance foyer [Job Order-3/22/83/10-577 FY83/Maintenance 2]
1983	April 19	construction of an entrance foyer completed [Job Order-3/22/83/10-577 FY83/Maintenance 2]
1983	August 2	repairing of bench, which was taken apart by contractor, completed at a cost of $22.89 [Job Order-FY83/10-577 FY83/Maintenance 2]
1983	October 28	roof work begun by Milcar Construction Co. of Hagerstown, MD, consisting of the following work: replacing the slate roof, the slate gable ends, the gutters and downspouts, the snowboard, installing a drip apron, and repairing the sheathing [Completion Report-1/17/84/3000-3-0179/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1983	December 26	roof work completed at a cost of $28,979 [Completion Report-1/17/84/3000-3-0179/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1984	June 6	repaired lock on bottom door in the basement [Job Order-5/18/84/10-577's FY84/Maintenance 2]
1984	August 28	replacing of the slate roof and repointing of the brick begun by Bonded Applicators of MD, Inc. [Letter of Award/Baptist Church Brick Pointing/Drawer 5]
1984	September 24	proposal to replace and repair 19 stained glass windows at a cost of $5,310 [Request for Quotations/Baptist Church Stained Glass/Drawer 5]
1985	January 11	replacing, glazing, and painting of 16 stained glass windows begun by Shenandoah Studio of Glass, Inc. of Front Royal, VA [Lump Sum Contract-1/25/85/Baptist Church Stained Glass/Drawer 5]
1985	January 23	stained glass window work completed at a cost of $6,600; Note: it is unclear how many windows were replaced [Lump Sum Contract-1/25/85/Baptist Church Stained Glass/Drawer 5]
1985	April 15	issued job order to spackle and paint office of personnel officer [Job Order-4/15/85/577 FY-85 Comp/Maintenance 2]

1985	May 17	spackling and painting of office of personnel officer completed at a cost of $140.53 [Job Order-4/15/85/577 FY-85 Comp/Maintenance 2]
1985	August 8	raking and repointing of the masonry completed at a cost of $10,800 [Completion Report-9/8/85/3000-3-0164/Morrell-Drawer 1]
1987	November 9	construction of a shelter over the southwest entrance begun [CRM Specialist's Daily Log]
1987	November 23	construction of a shelter over the southwest entrance completed [CRM Specialist's Daily Log]

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