

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

AFR 157
In reply refer to:
H30

EASTERN OFFICE	
Office of Design & Construction	
FEB 20 1958	
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Asst. Chief	3/1/58
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Ext. Affairs	3/1/58
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Personnel Office	
Interpretation	

February 20, 1958

202
2/20

Memorandum

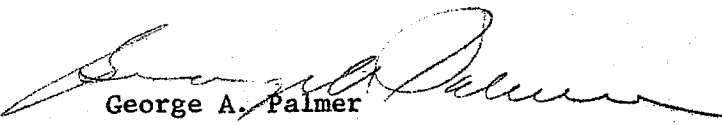
To: Director

From: Acting Regional Director

Subject: Part I, Historic Building Report, Harpers Ferry NM
Buildings 45 and 45A-Outbuilding

In accordance with FO-11-56, Historic Building Report, we have assembled and are distributing herewith Part I of the subject report. The report consists of the following sections: Administrative and Historical Data Sections. (~~An Architectural Data Section was deemed unnecessary by EODC.~~)

This report should be reviewed by no later than March 3, 1958. Our comments will follow.


George A. Palmer
Acting Regional Director

In duplicate

Attachment

Copy to: Supt., Harpers Ferry, w/c report
Chief, EODC, w/c report

APPROVAL SHEET

Recommended:

Director

Recommended:

Regional Director

Recommended:

Chief, E.O.D.C.

Approved:

Superintendent

PART I
HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

Building No. 45
Building No. 45A, Outbuilding

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Distributed for Review by Region Five

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ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Building No. 45

Building No. 45A, Outbuilding

Harpers Ferry National Monument

**Prepared by
Acting Superintendent Raymond L. Ives
October 16, 1957**

SECTION I: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Building:

Building No. 45, Name to be Determined, and Building No. 45A, Outbuilding.

B. Proposed Use of Structure:

Under MISSION 66 Planning it has been suggested that this structure be made the main Visitor Center with the second floor used as offices and an auditorium.

C. Provision for Operating the House:

No funds have been programmed for refurnishing the house. No cooperative agreements have been executed or proposed for furnishing and operating the house. Money will be needed to establish the exhibits in the Visitor Center.

D. Preliminary Estimate of Cost of Rehabilitating the Structure and Grounds:

It is estimated that the cost of restoring the exterior and rehabilitating the interior of Building No. 45 will amount to

\$55,000.00

HISTORICAL DATA

Building No. 45

Building No. 45A, Outbuilding

Harpers Ferry National Monument

**Prepared by
Park Historian Herbert H. Kissling
October 16, 1957
(Rev. Jan. 22, 1958)**

SECTION II: HISTORICAL DATA

1. Introduction:

Building No. 45 was built on Government land well before the Civil War by a private individual with the permission of the Armory officials. This was a common practice which helped to solve certain problems for the Government in the operation of the Armory. This report is written from all presently available data concerning the construction and historical associations of the structure.

2. Location of Building No. 45:

By deed dated April 25, 1751, Robert Harper was granted a tract of land by Lord Fairfax, Proprietor of the Northern Neck of Virginia.^{1.} This 125 acres is the entire present site of Harpers Ferry and was part of the estate of Robert Harper which passed on his death in 1782 to his neice. The neice, Sarah Harper, married a John Wager and in this way the Wager family came into possession of the Robert Harper holdings. In 1796 in order to establish an Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry the Government bought the original Harper tract with the exception of six acres which were reserved by the Wagers. Building No. 45 was built on a lot of ground which remained in the hands of the Government from 1796 until after the Civil War and all records pertaining to the structure were therefore necessarily property of the Government during the pre-Civil War period.

3. Construction of the Building:

Especially during the earlier years of the development of the Armory, the Government authorized private individuals to build

1. Northern Neck Grants, Book 6, p. 496, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

on Government land for certain reasons. Superintendent Stubblefield explained the basis on which this procedure was justified in a letter dated February 23, 1829, as follows:

....It may be well to remark, that each of the grants or permissions given to the individuals mentioned under the head of persons not connected with the armory to build on the public lands, are decidedly advantageous to the interest of the armory, and required for the convenience and accomodation of the workmen therein employed, so much so that it is believed the United States have derived from them benefits equivalent to several thousand dollars, by thus destroying, in some measure, the imposition and oppressive monopoly which before prevailed, and which grew out of the fact that all of the real property at this place, except that of the United States, belonged to a single family, who exacted exhorbitant rents from shop keepers, mechanics, &c., even sometimes restricting them to particular kinds of business, who were thus, in their turn, compelled to charge the workmen employed in the armory corresponding rates for the ordinary means of subsistence, and thereby, in the end, rendering it necessary for the Government to pay for work at prices higher than those for which it might otherwise have done.

On a former occasion, Mr. Calhoun, during the period that he was at the head of the War Department, and to whom this subject was referred, was clearly of opinion that the original purchase of the lands occupied by this armory, from John Wager, left it entirely discretionary with the Government whether or not to permit merchants, shopkeepers, mechanics, and tradesmen of every description whatsoever, to erect buildings and pursue their different modes of business, on the public lands here, to any extent that the interests of the armory and the convenience of workmen therein employed might require.².

In this same report is a condensed statement of buildings erected by private individuals on Government lands. This lists 120 buildings of which many are substantial stone or brick structures.

Unfortunately there is no map to go with this lengthy report.

2. House of Representatives Document No. 138, 20th Congress, 2d Session, War Department.

which definitely locates each structure. Therefore, it is necessary to deduce the probable date of construction and the owner of the building from the written description and an 1835 map. In 1826 John G. Wilson built a stone, rough cast building which he used as a dwelling and store-house. The house valued at \$2,500.00 was erected on the strength of a letter from the Ordnance Department dated March 23, 1825, which gave him permission to build on Government land.³ There is a further note on this building which helps to locate it.

Note 6. Lot No. 4, under same head, is situated on Shenandoah Street. The house built upon it is a large stone building; the site was formerly occupied by a large rock in the side of the hill, which required a large expenditure of money to remove it.⁴

By comparing the above with the 1835 map (Appendix I and Drawing No. NW-HF 3002, Harpers Ferry National Monument Master Plan) it appears that the building most likely to fit the description is Building No. 45. It is the largest building on the north side of Shenandoah Street that is on Government land. All the rest of the buildings between it and the Armory are within the Wager Six Acre Reservation and privately owned. The house must be on the north side of the street because of the note that a large rock in the hillside was removed. It then appears likely that Building No. 45 was built by John G. Wilson in 1826. The historical use of the building in the 1859-1865 period will be the subject of research in the National Archives.

3. As yet there has been no search for this letter.

4. House of Representatives Document No. 138, 20th Congress, 2d Session, War Department.

4. Post-Civil War History of the Structure:

In 1869 a great auction of real estate at Harpers Ferry belonging to the Federal Government was held and Building No. 45 and its lot were included. When the map was drawn up to go with this sale in 1869, this lot was designated as Lot 1, North of Shenandoah Street. This reference is continued in subsequent sales of the property.

At the sale in 1869 this property, which was described as "Adjoining Catholic School lot - 106 ft. front on Shenandoah Street - 110 ft. deep - 48 ft. on back line. Large stone storehouse.", was sold for \$3,125.00.⁵ The purchaser was Joseph D. Holmes who in the 1869-1873 period made repairs to the roof and porch. He also built a new outbuilding which may be Harpers Ferry National Monument Building No. 45A, pit toilet.⁶ Mr. Holmes was one of a number of citizens of Harpers Ferry who did not complete payment for the lots bought at auction and the Government repossessed the property and resold it. In the case of this lot, it was reauctioned on May 25, 1880. At this sale Joshua Cavalier bought Lot 1, North of Shenandoah Street and Lot 1, Block CC for a total of \$870.00.⁷

5. Maps:

Appended to this report are a number of maps which relate to the subject building and to which reference is suggested. Also reference may be made to the Harpers Ferry National Monument Master

5. Document in Historians' File.

6. Public Buildings Service, Harpers Ferry Case No. 388, Abatement Cases under the Act of June 14, 1878, R.G. 121, National Archives.

7. Deed Book 108, p. 487-489, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, West Virginia.

Plan Drawings No. NM-HF 3055, Architectural Base Map of Harpers Ferry The Lower Town; 3004, Historical Base Map - 1803; 3002, Historical Base Map - 1835, sheet 2 of 3; 3000, Historical Base Map - 1848; and 3001, Historical Base Map - 1869. Drawing No. NM-HF 3056, 3 sheets, comprises the available modern measured drawings of the structure.

The 1803 and two 1811 maps (Appendices III, IV, and V) which are attached do not show any building on the site of present Building No. 45. The 1835 map (Appendix I) shows the structure. However, the 1835 Wager Flat (Appendix VI) does not show the building. This is explained by the fact that this plat was concerned only with the property within the bounds of those reserved acres. The 1835 map superimposed on the 1913 railroad map (Appendix II) shows a very good relationship between the two surveys seventy-eight years apart. The 1869 map (Appendix VII) further locates the property in relation to the Wager Reservation and other buildings presently included in Harpers Ferry National Monument.

6. Summary:

Harpers Ferry National Monument Building No. 45 was constructed on Government land by a private individual probably in the year 1826. Present documentary evidence used in conjunction with available maps substantiates this opinion. Mr. John G. Wilson built this stone dwelling and store-house valued at \$2,500.00 on the north side of Shenandoah Street. The historical use of the structure in the period of our primary concern remains the subject of further research in the National Archives.

Following the Civil War the property with its stone store-house was bought from the Government by Joseph D. Holmes who repaired the roof and porch and built an outbuilding which may be Building No. 45A. The inability of Mr. Holmes to complete payment for the property resulted in the Government repossessing it and reselling it in 1880 to Joshua Cavalier.

It is recommended that this large structure be restored on the exterior to its 1859 appearance and developed on the interior as the main Visitor Center for the Lower Town section of Harpers Ferry National Monument. There is ample room on the first floor of the building for the main museum and the second floor could be used for offices and an auditorium. It is located directly across the street from the main parking lot and at the entrance to the Lower Town group of buildings. Its location is ideal for the beginning of the walking tour of the Monument.

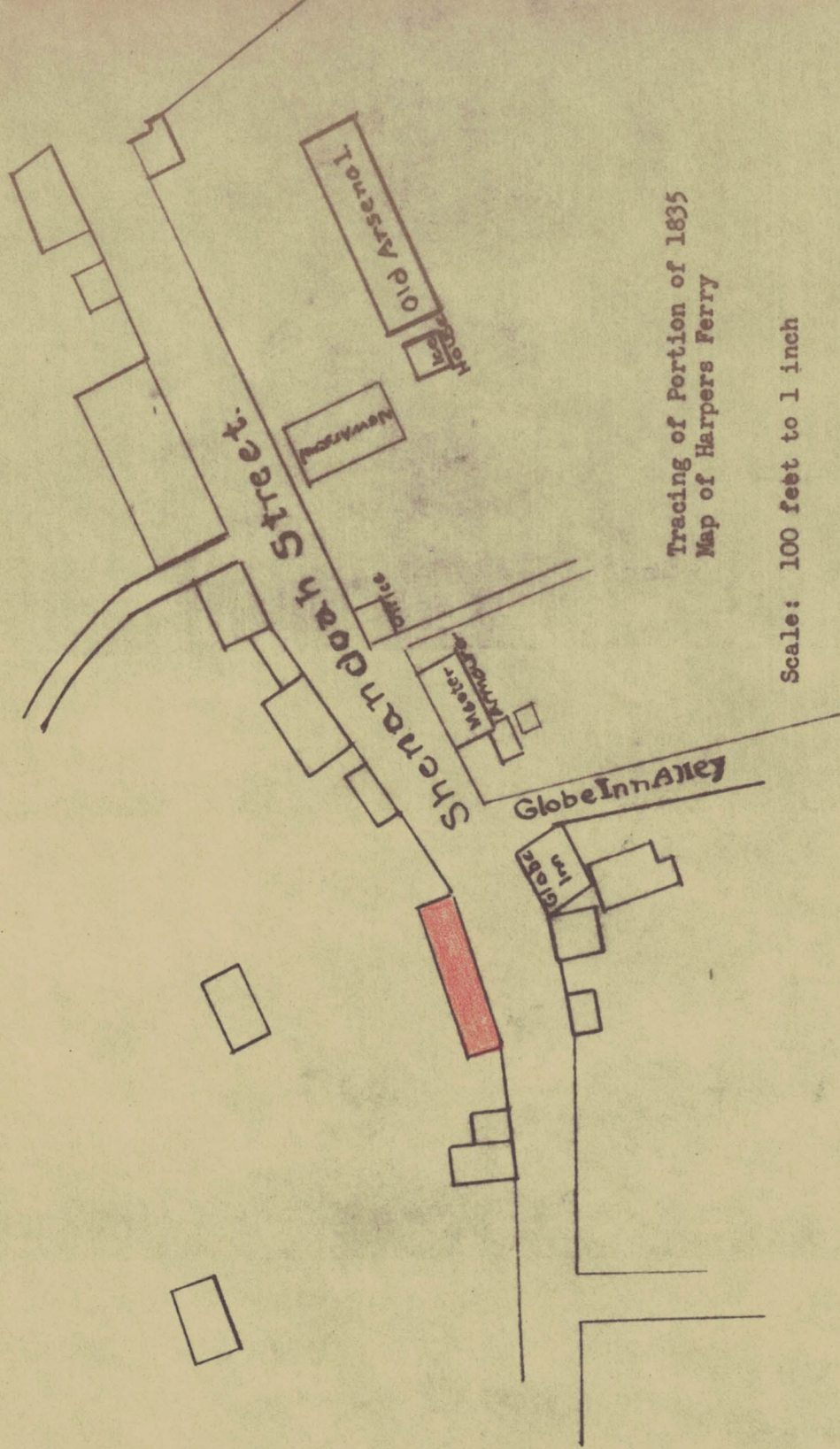
Report Prepared
by

Herbert H. Kiesling
Park Historian

October 16, 1957

APPENDIX I

1835 MAP

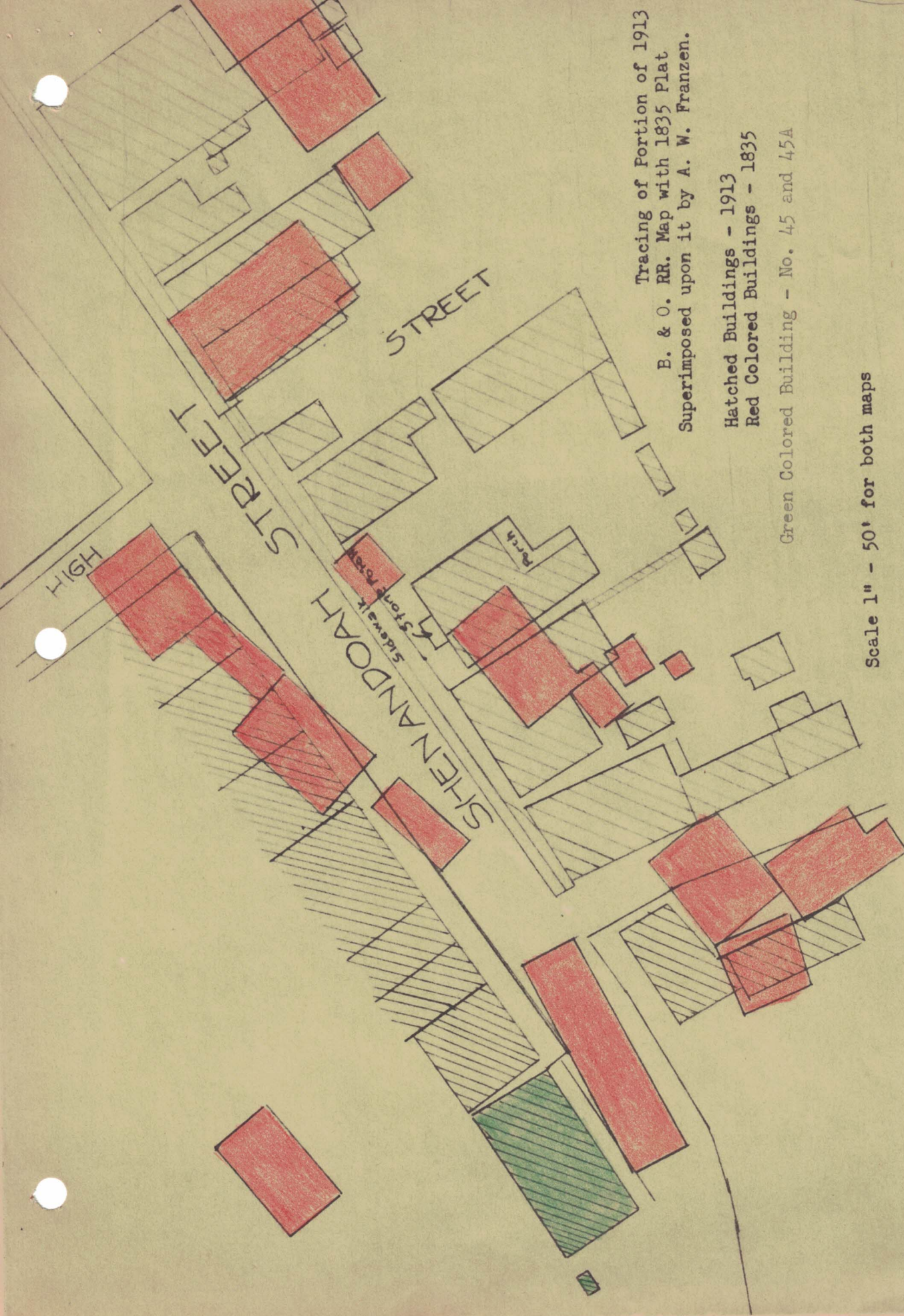


Tracing of Portion of 1835
Map of Harpers Ferry

Scale: 100 feet to 1 inch

APPENDIX II

1913 MAP



Tracing of Portion of 1913
B. & O. RR. Map with 1835 Plat
Superimposed upon it by A. W. Franzen.

Hatched Buildings - 1913

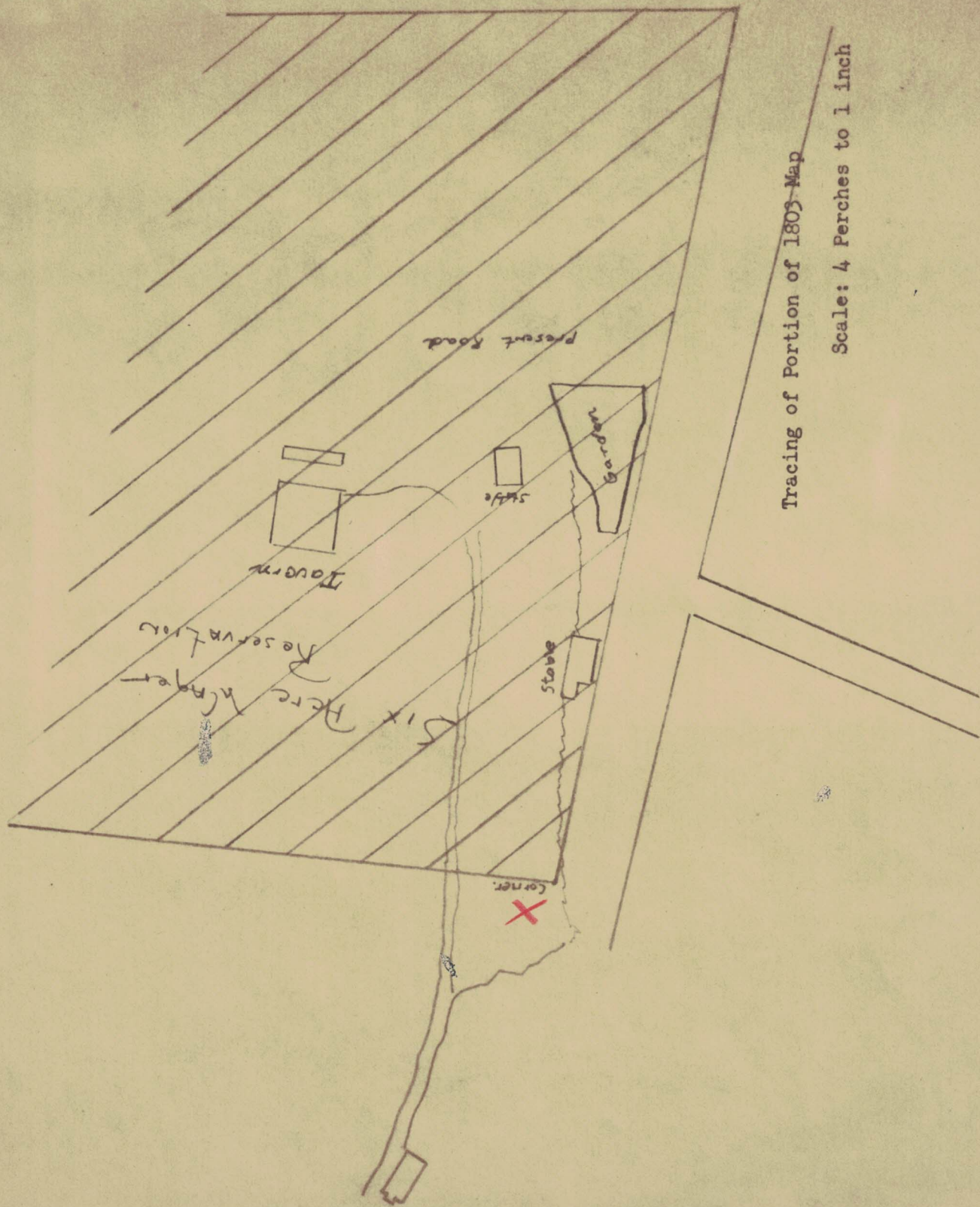
Red Colored Buildings - 1835

Green Colored Building - No. 45 and 45A

Scale 1" - 50' for both maps

APPENDIX III

LEO3 NAT



Tracing of Portion of 1803 Map

Scale: 4 Perches to 1 inch

APPENDIX IV

1811 PLAT

Colman's

Shuman and Son

1891

605

Wood Street

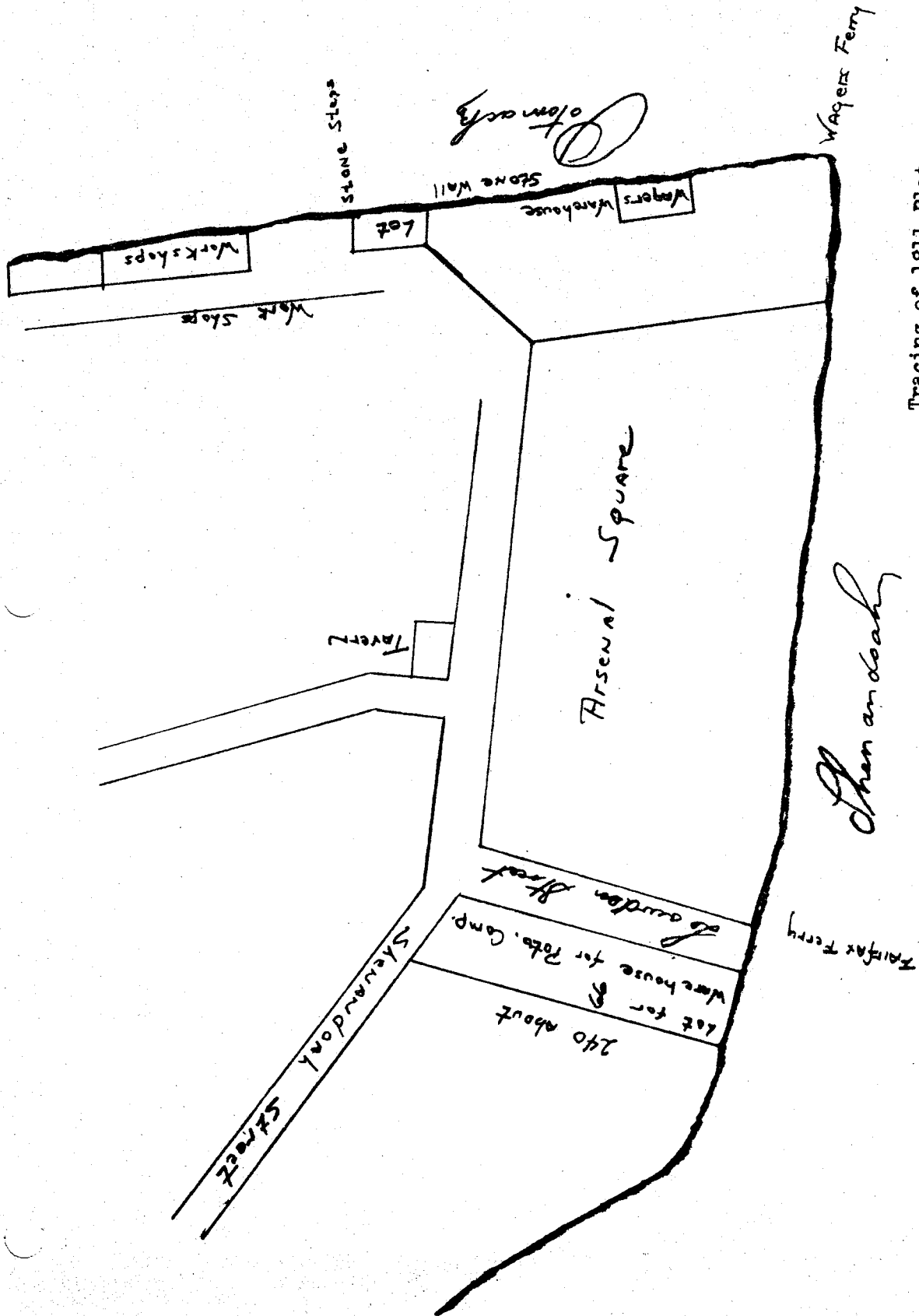
Armed Lot

Century 264
Century 264
Century 264
Century 264

P. 259(5) 1891

APPENDIX V

1811 PLAT

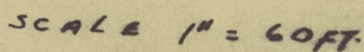


Tracing of 1811 Plat

APPENDIX VI

1835 WAGON FLAT

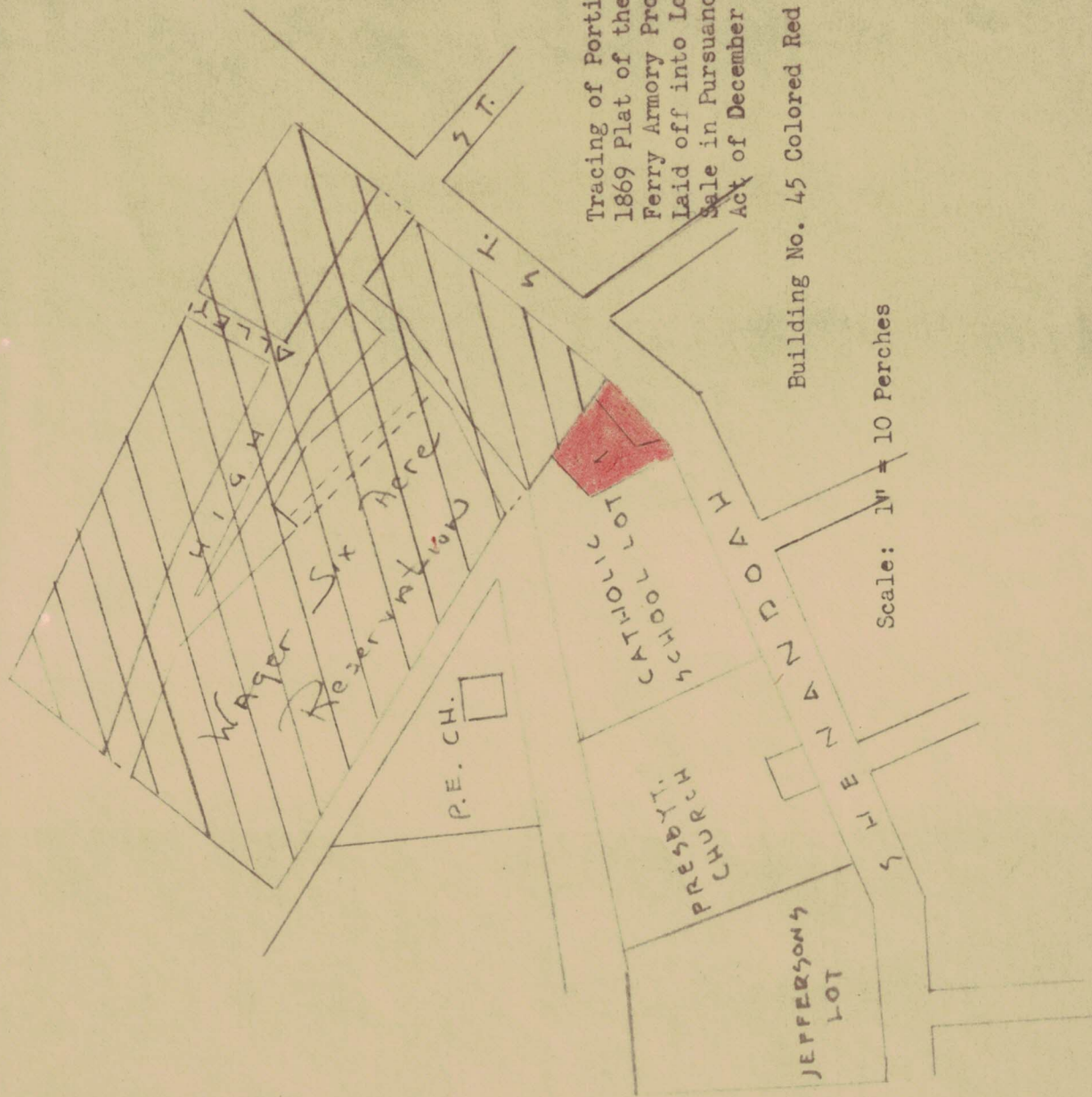
~~X~~
IRON BOLT



Tracing of Portion of 1835
Plat of Wager Lots. Traced
from the Original in the
Jefferson County Court
House, Deed Book 29, by
A. W. Franzen.

APPENDIX VII

1942 PLAT



Tracing of Portion of
1869 Plat of the Harpers
Ferry Armory Property
Laid off into Lots for
Sale in Pursuance of the
Act of December 15, 1868.

Building No. 45 Colored Red

Scale: 1" = 10 Perches

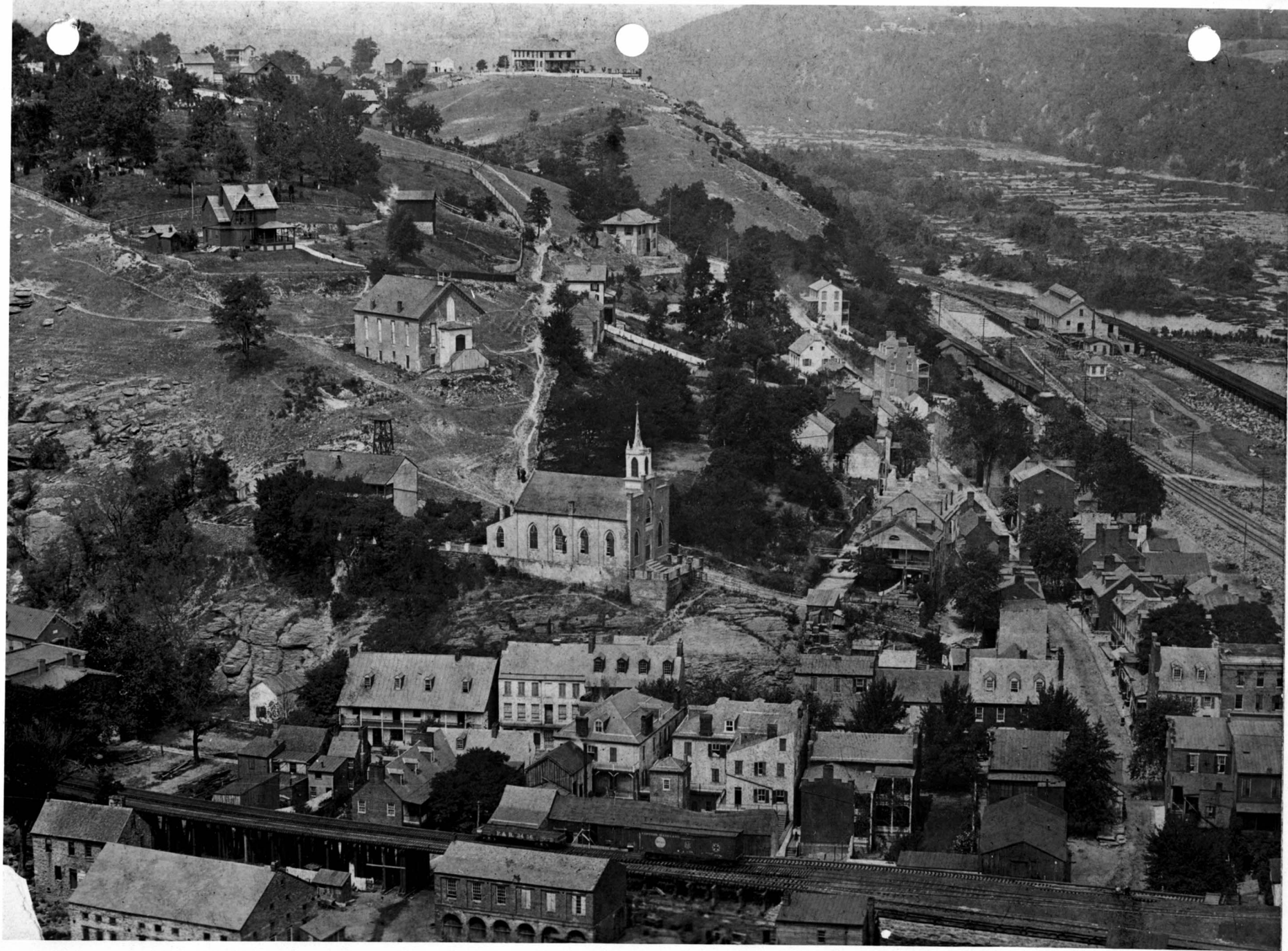
APPENDIX VIII

PHOTOGRAPHS

HARPERS FERRY FROM LOUDOUN HEIGHTS

(Taken prior to 1896)

Building 45 is last large building on the
left facing Shenandoah Street below Catholic Church
(church in center with steeple)



7. Comments:

Harpers Ferry National Monument Building No. 45 was a part of the historic scene in 1859 and for a number of years before and should be restored to its appearance in the historic period. It was built on Government land by a private individual which was a common practice at Harpers Ferry before the Civil War. In considering the use to which this large structure may be put in the operation and interpretation of Harpers Ferry National Monument, there are several factors.

The location of this structure has a considerable bearing on its suggested use in the interpretive program. Access to the Monument by automobile is possible at present by only two routes. Those entering along Shenandoah Street from Highway #340 come to this building first when arriving at the main group of buildings. Those entering through the town of Harpers Ferry will arrive at this building as directed to the main parking lot now in use. This parking lot is immediately across the street from Building No. 45. It is therefore the first building which is viewed by visitors upon leaving their cars at the parking lot or upon entering the Monument. Other factors being equal this building would be the logical choice for the Reception and Main Visitor Center.

The elements of interest at Harpers Ferry are varied and the story rather complex. A general introduction to Harpers Ferry National Monument and its historical components would be given here. Enough of each story, which will be told in detail elsewhere, will be given so that the visitor's interest will be aroused to seek the full story.

By introducing them to the story of the John Brown Raid, arms manufacturing, the Civil War, and the old buildings, and by directing them to branch centers where detailed information will be made available, the expense of developing and operating this center will be justified. These branch centers or museums may be developed as the manned or self-guiding type as may be determined to be most satisfactory in the development of the Monument.

The cost of developing this Visitor Center should be moderate. Little major alteration in the structure will be required. The first floor is composed of one large and one small room. Providing as it does a large open area, effective museum organization can be achieved. The second floor could be satisfactorily remodeled into office and small auditorium use. There would also be sufficient room on the upper floors to store museum displays in case of flood or when not in use. Access to the structure from the rear on the second floor level can be developed to be used in case of flood. Being on the north side of Shenandoah Street the building would be less susceptible to destruction by flooding than certain other structures in the flood zone of the lower town section which might be considered for this use. The building is both interesting and attractive to visitors.

From this building visitors can be directed to the points of interest in an orderly and effective pattern from which they will achieve the greatest benefit during their stay. It is therefore recommended that Building No. 45 be developed as the Reception and Main Visitor Center for Harpers Ferry National Monument.