

Region Five
481 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

March 4, 1958

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument
From: Regional Director
Subject: Part I, Historic Building Report - Building No. 15
Booney Building

We have reviewed the subject report and approve the recommendations therein with the following reservations:

1. That final approval of the proposed restoration of the exterior await the preparation and review of Part II of the subject report, since detailed structural or physical history concerning the structure's historic and present-day appearance was not presented in the report. (We suggest that in preparing future reports that physical history be presented in the Historical Data Section, especially when no Architectural Data has been provided by a resident architect. Alternatively, such information may be set forth by the Park Historian in the Architectural Data Section.)

2. Agree with the proposed restoration of the interior of the subject structure, but believe that the exact treatment should not be decided until a SKETCH of prospectus has been approved for the monument, and upon which may be based a study of how all the structures can be used. In the meantime, we have no objections to the "store-window" display as an interim development.

Samuel J. Tobin
Regional Director

In duplicate

Copy to: Director
Chief, NHC
Operations (att. Mr. Nelson)

MHW:lign/cp

General
Daily
Area

APPROVAL SHEET

Recommended:

Director

Recommended:

Amel Doe 3/4/58

Regional Director

Recommended:

Chief, E.O.D.C.

Approved:

Superintendent

*3/14/58 - WASO - OK - Cross
w/ Tobin recommendations*

PART I
HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

The Downey Building
(Building No. 15)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Distributed for Review by Region Five

HF-4

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~~SECTION III: ARCHITECTURAL DATA (To be Prepared)~~

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The Downey Building

(Building No. 15)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

**Prepared by
Acting Superintendent Raymond L. Ives
October 7, 1957**

SECTION I: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Building:

Building No. 15, "The Downey Building".

B. Proposed Use of Structure:

The exterior of Building No. 15 to be restored to its 1859 - 1865 appearance, and the interior of the structure to be rehabilitated. Small exhibits relating to the 1859 - 65 use of the house to be placed in windows where they may be seen from the street. Visitors will not actually enter the house.

C. Provisions for Operating the House:

No funds have yet been programed for refurnishing the house. No cooperative agreement has been executed or proposed for furnishing and operating the house. Money will be needed to establish the small period window exhibits.

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

It is estimated that the total cost of restoring the exterior and of rehabilitating the interior of Building No. 15 will amount to - - - ----\$35,000.

HISTORICAL DATA

The Downey Building

(Building No. 15)

Harpers Ferry National Monument

**Prepared by
Supervising Park Historian Charles W. Snell
October 7, 1957
(Rev. Jan. 30, 1958)**

SECTION II: HISTORICAL DATA

Introduction: Part I of the Historic Building Report for Building No. 15 has been prepared in accordance with Acting Regional Director Gibson's memorandum of September 17, 1957. This section is based on all presently available documentary data.

1. Ownership of the Land, 1835 - 1868.

On April 2, 1835 the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery for Jefferson County, Virginia, appointed Commissioners "to lay off and divide into three equal lots and parcels, the real estate at Harper's Ferry which descended to James B. Wager, Gerard B. Wager and Sally Ann Wager, now Sally Ann Swayne, the wife of Noah H. Swayne, from their father John Wager, deceased."¹ The property thus being divided at Harpers Ferry was commonly known as the "Wager Six Acre Reservation," an island of land in private ownership surrounded on all sides by land owned by the United States Government.²

On October 10, 1835 the three Commissioners reported to the Court: "To James B. Wager we allot & assign the following lots as designated J.B.W. & numbered in the annexed Plat, viz. Lots No. 1-7-9-15 being a part of the old tavern lot - 19-23-25-27-37-39-41-44 including the new

1. Gibson, etc. vs Wager, etc. Decree, Deed Book 29, pp. 140-41. Jefferson County Clerk's Office, Charles Town, West Va.

2. 1835 Plat, "The Wager Six Acre Reservation, drawn by James M. Brown, S.G.C.," in Deed Book 29, 1847-48, p. 140. See Appendix I for a tracing of a portion of this Plat.

"buildings recently attached to the mansion -46-47-53 & 54." The Court further appointed a special receiver for the Court to take into possession the share assigned to James B. Wager for the purpose of collecting rents on this land to be paid into the Court, "from and after the time the said (James B.) Wager took benefit of the insolvent laws..."³

On January 14, 1836, the Court appointed two Commissioners and directed them to sell at public auction to the highest bidder the real estate of James B. Wager in Harpers Ferry. On November 26, 1836 the Court further authorized the Commissioners to divide Lot No. 15, the old tavern lot, into parcels. Lot No. 15 was therefore subdivided into four lots marked No. 1, 2, 3, and 4, of Lot No. 15.

On October 28, 1837, Lots No. 2 and No. 4 in the subdivision of Lot No. 15 were sold to William Anderson of Harpers Ferry; Lot No. 2 for \$1,610 and Lot No. 4 for \$1,012.50 (See Appendix I).⁴ Building No. 15, today, occupies the major portion of Wager Lot 15 - subdivision 4.

On July 20, 1846 William Anderson, of the City of Baltimore, sold for \$3,000 to Susan Downey, of Jefferson County, Va., a certain house and lot of ground situated on High Street, Harpers Ferry, "being the property now occupied by Alfred Andrews as a dwelling house, shoe store,

3. Deed Book 29, pp. 140-41.

4. February 8, 1841, Deed of B. & S., Deed Book 24, pp. 457-458

"etc, the lot hereby conveyed is embraced within the lines designated by the figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, in the survey and plat made by James N. Brown, Surveyor of the County of Jefferson on the 17th day of July 1846."

The deed further reads: "the fences between the lot herein conveyed and the adjacent ground still remaining the property of said William Anderson, are to be kept up and maintained as partition fences, at the joint and equal expense of said parties - and moreover that a new fence running from fig. 7 to 8 is to be made and kept up at joint and equal expense..."⁵
(See Appendix II).

On August 1, 1848, for \$300, Susan Downey purchased additional land from William Anderson; the deed reading in part:

"a certain irregular shaped piece or parcel of land... one point or end of it resting on the alley which runs parallel with the U.S. Armory work shops - ... being that portion of said diagram which is contained within the figures and letters 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. J. I. H. G. thence to 4..."

Susan Downey, on her part, granted William Anderson:

"a right of way for persons on foot, from the lot of said William Anderson upon which his brick store house stands (Wager Lot 15-subdivision 2, the site of Buildings No. 11 and 11A), through the premises of said Susan Downey to High Street; said right of way to commence at the point in said Anderson's lot between figures 3 and 11 as marked on the above diggram, and thence along the alley to fig 2 and figure 1 on the street - as the same is marked "right of way" on said plat - said way as it is now open and capable of being used - to be kept at all times hereafter free and open to the unrestricted use of the Said William Anderson... The extent of the use and enjoyment of said right of way by said William Anderson and his assigns, and the occupants of said lot, to be fully and

5. July 20, 1846, Deed of B.&S., Deed Book 28, p.174.

"for all purposes of ingress and egress of the said occupants and those having business with them, usual and convenient for the full enjoyment of the said lot marked "Wm Anderson" as aforesaid - said lot being closed up in front..." 6

(See Appendix III).

On May 28, 1849, for the sum of \$200, Susan Downey sold to the United States Government the following part of her property:

"Beginning at north western corner of said lot no. 15, on the alley in the rear of the workshops, where said lot adjoins the north eastern corner of that part of lot No. 16, conveyed to the United States by F. A. Hoeder and wife, by deed dated June 6, 1848, thence southwardly twenty five feet along the dividing line between said lots No. 15 and 16 - thence eastwardly eighteen feet to a stone house (Building No. 7) on said lot no. 15, thence northwardly twenty five feet to said alley, thence eighteen feet along said alley to the beginning..." (See Appendix III).

The United States Government, on its part, agreed: "that the parcel of land aforesaid as hereby granted and conveyed, shall be forever kept open as part of a common street and highway, as it now stands..." 7

In 1868 the heirs of Susan Downey sold the following house and lot in Harpers Ferry:

"...the two story stone building over basement with stone kitchen attached and lot of ground thereunto belonging... aforesaid lot fronting on High Street in said town and running back to Canal (now Potomac) Street..." 8

Summary: In 1837 the land upon which Building No. 15 now stands passed from the Wager family to William Anderson. In 1846, Anderson sold this property to Susan Downey, who

6. August 1, 1848, Deed of E.&S., Deed Book 30, pp.306-7.
7. May 28, 1849, Deed of E.&S., Deed Book 30, pp. 487-88.
8. April 28, 1868, Deed of E.&S., Deed Book 3, pp.337-38.

who remained the owner from 1846 to 1868, which covers the historical period, 1859 - 1865, with which we are particularly concerned. It is therefore suggested that Building No. 15 be called the "Downey House".

2. Erection of Building No. 15, 1830 - 1846.

The 1803 map, "Plan of the proposed junction of the CANAL at the lower Falls of the Shenandoah with the Public Canal at HARPERS FERRY and the necessary Locks for descending into the Potomak River,"⁹ dated Feb. 1803, and reproduced as part of the Harpers Ferry Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF 3004, clearly shows the site of Building No. 15 as an undeveloped area at that date.

The 1835 map, "Map of Harpers Ferry Shewing the Location of the Winchester and Potomac Railroad, Drawn by Lieut. White, Allen, and R S Smith, U.S. Army under the direction of James Kearney, Lt. Col. and T.E., Map 2, 1835,"¹⁰ and reproduced as part of the Harpers Ferry Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF 3002, sheet two of three, also shows the site of Building No. 15 as an undeveloped area. It should be noted, however, that the 1835 map cannot be accepted as definitive on this point as the map fails to show the Harper and Wager Houses, two structures that were standing in 1835. This indicates that the engineers were not interested in this area particularly, and therefore undoubtedly did not bother to delineate structures in that vicinity.

9. National Archives R.G. 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortification Map File, Part of Map: Dr. 150, Sheet 1.

10. National Archives R.G. 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortification Map File, Part of Map Dr. 150 Sheet 82 -2.

The price of \$1,012.50 paid for Wager Lot 15 -subdivision 4 by Anderson in 1837 may indicate that there was a house standing on the property at that time. If this were the case, that building was probably Building No. 15, as Downey's purchase of the land from Anderson in 1846 and 1848, and her sale of a part of the lot to the United States in 1849, demonstrates that the northern end of Lot 15-subdivision 4 did not contain any structures at those dates.

On July 17, 1846, Building No. 15 was certainly standing. James M. Brown's Survey of that date gives the following information on the house and lot: (See Appendix III)

"Beginning at Mrs. Stephensons (Wager Lot 15 - subdivision 1, site of Buildings No. 12 & 12A) on the North side of High Street (see fig 1) this point is 7 ft 5 inches from the corner of house A, and 30 ft from N. H. Swaynes corner (Wager Lot No. 16, site of Building No. 16), thence with Mrs. Stephensons line (stone wall) 25 ft 9 in to a point that is 8 ft 3 in from the angle formed by the House and kitchen, B, and is 6 ft from the house wall and 5 ft 3 in from the wall of the kitchen (2) thence again with her line (the fence) 11 ft 8 in to 3, an angle in the fence which is 6 ft from the corner of the kitchen (C) thence again with the fence 22 ft 9 inches to 4, a point that is 4 ft 3 inches from another corner of the kitchen, D, thence again with the fence 6 ft 9 in to 5 another angle in said fence, this point is 6 ft 10 inches from the west side of the kitchen door and is 3 ft 4 in from the kitchen wall, thence again with the fence which is parallel to and 4 ft 6 in from the wall of P Coon's house (Wager Lot 15-subdivision 3-, sites of Buildings No. 10), 25 feet, to another angle in said fence 6, this point is 7 ft 8 in from the wall of the ware house HI (Building No. 7), thence parallel to said wall 28 ft 3 in to 7, a point in the centre between the line of Swayne's (Lot No. 16) and the Ware house line (JI) prolonged thence by a line midway between Swayne and the ware house to the Alley at 8, which is also in the centre between the corner of the ware house and Swayne's corner (9) and thence with his line to High Street (10) thence with the same 30 ft to the beginning." 11

11. July 17, 1846, Deed of Metes and Bounds, Deed Book 28, page 175.

The map, dated May 9, 1866, "A Sketch of the Present Position & Proposed Alteration of the line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad at Harper's Ferry," (See Appendix 186 IV) by a generalized symbol, shows buildings standing at that date on the site of Building No. 15.¹²

In summary, then, Building No. 15 may have been standing in 1837 and was certainly standing in 1846.

3. Historical Uses of Building No. 15, 1846 - 1856.

In 1846, as indicated on page 2 of this report, Building No. 15 was "occupied by Alfred Andrews as a dwelling house, shoe store, etc..."

In April 1856, Susan Downey ran the following advertisement in the local newspaper:

"House for Rent

"The Dwelling House, on High Street, Harpers Ferry, lately occupied by Mrs. Fine. The house is well adapted for a Boarding House. Possession given immediately..."¹³

Additional information on the historical uses of Building No. 15 in the 1856 - 1865 period awaits the result of further research in the newspapers of the period.

4. Measured Drawings of Building No. 15:

There are no historical or modern measured drawings of Building No. 15 available at present.

12. National Archives R.G. 77, Dr. 150, Sheet 74.

13. Virginia Free Press, April 10, 1856, p.3.

APPENDIX I

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE 1835 WAGER PLAT

PUBLIC

LAND



SCALE 1" = 60 FT.

PORTION OF TRACING OF 1835 PLAT OF WAGER LOTS. TRACED FROM THE ORIGINAL IN JEFFERSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE BY A.W. FRANZEN.

APPENDIX II

1846 Flat

SHI NAW DO AH SIDEET

ALLEY

N. H. SWAYNE
Wager Lot No. 13

G. B. WAGER
14

P. COONS
15 - 3

WM. ANDERSON
15 - 2

MRS. STEPHENSON
15 - 1

120 FT. 6 IN.

H I G H S T R E E T

Building
WAREHOUSE
No. 7

15 - 4

Building
No. 15

15 FT.

N. H. SWAYNE
16

62 FT.

50 FT.

Red area indicates property sold by William Anderson to Susan Downy on July 20, 1846.

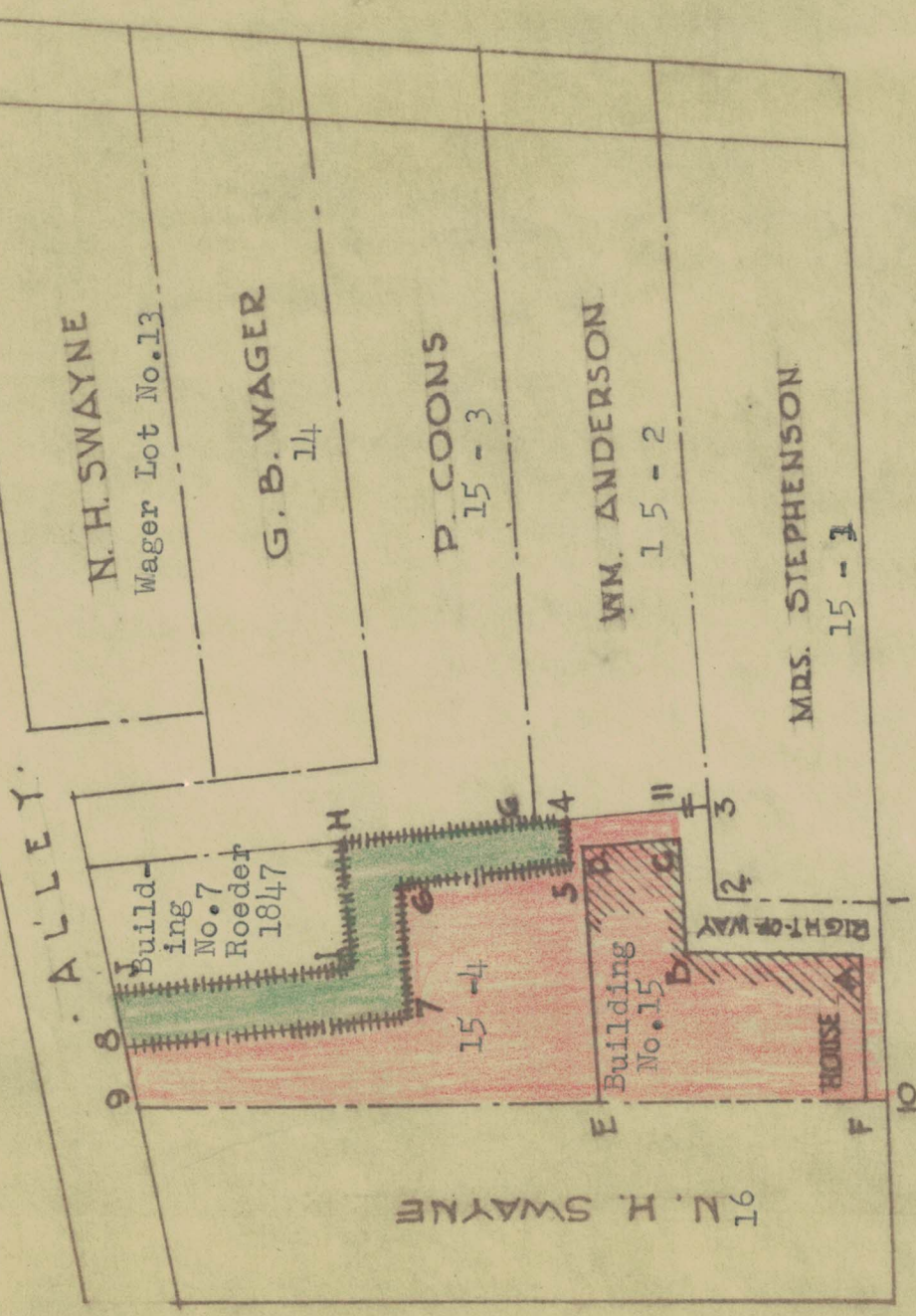
DEED BOOK 28, P. 175
JEFFERSON CO., W. VIRGINIA

1846 Plat

SCALE 1" = 20'

APPENDIX III

1848 Plat



H I G H S T R E E T .

Red area indicates property purchased by Downey from Anderson, July 20, 1846.

Green area indicates property purchased by Susan Downey from William Anderson on August 1, 1848.

ANDERSON TO DOWNEY PLAT
DEED BOOK 30, PR. 306-307
JEFFERSON CO., W. VIRGINIA.

1848 Plat

SCALE 1" = 30'

APPENDIX IV

TRACING OF A PORTION OF THE B. & O. RR. MAP

MAY 9, 1866



Tracing of A Portion of
the B. & O. R.R. Map
of Harpers Ferry,
May 9, 1866

APPENDIX V

PHOTOGRAPHS

Report written by

Charles W. Snell, Historian
(Park Supervisory)

from primary data
collected by:

Park Historian
Herbert H. Kissling.

Dated October 7, 1957.

A RECENT (1955) VIEW OF BUILDING NO. 15

(No historical picture showing this building is yet available)

Buildings from Left to Right: Corner of Building No. 16, Building No. 15 (White Stone Building); Building No. 14, erected in 1857; Building No. 13 (since removed by N.P.S. but the site of a 1859-65 structure), Building No. 12-A and part of Building 12 visible at the extreme right.



5. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Since this report was first submitted on October 8, 1957, additional documentary evidence has been found which throws further light on the construction and early uses of Building No. 15. William Anderson purchased Wager Lot No. 15, subdivision 4, on October 28, 1837 for \$1,012.50. This price may indicate that Building No. 15 was then standing. What seems more probable, however, is that in the period of 1837 to July 1, 1839, William Anderson designed and erected this house. The existence of the stone house (Building No. 15) in 1839 has been established by the fact that James R. Hayman, editor of the Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, rented Anderson's stone house on High Street, for a two year period, the lease taking effect July 1, 1839.

It therefore appears that this newspaper was located in Building No. 15 during most of its two year existence, April 1839 to late 1840. (See "Historic Building Report, Part I, for the First and Second Marmion Tenant Houses," dated January 27, 1958, pages 16-17, for a detailed presentation of this evidence; also page 10 for a brief sketch of the building activities of William Anderson, Merchant-Architect.)

In January 1840, Hayman apparently sublet part of Building No. 15, for the following advertisement appeared in the newspaper at that time:

"REMOVAL. A. & H. V. ANDREWS Respectfully inform their customers and the public generally that they have removed their BOOT AND SHOES MAKING ESTABLISHMENT, TO NO. 4, HIGH STREET." 14

As shown by evidence presented on page 2 of this report, Alfred Andrews still occupied Building No. 15 as a shoe store and dwelling in 1846, at the time of the sale of this property to Susan Downey.

14. The Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, January 8, 1840, p.3.

Further Research Required: A careful and complete search of the newspapers from 1830 to 1861 will enable us to establish a complete chain of uses of the structure from the time of its construction until the Civil War. The same sources may also provide data on the date of erection. The United States Census for 1840, 1850, and 1860, will also provide further information on both Building No. 15 and its owners. Data on the background of William Anderson and Susan Downey will also be obtained from the correspondence of the United States Armory that is now ordered on microfilm from the National Archives.

Restoration and Historical Significance:

Building No. 15 was definitely a part of the 1859-1865 historic scene. As far as is now known, however, the building was not closely associated in anyway with the John Brown Raid in 1859 or the events of the Civil War, other than being a part of the scene in which those historic actions took place. It is therefore recommended that the exterior of Building No. 15 be restored to its 1859 appearance. It is also believed that the exterior of this structure, in the main, from an architectural point of view, is substantially as it was in 1859. Therefore, only restoration, and not reconstruction, will be required on the exterior of this structure.

Monument Use of the Building:

It is recommended that the first (street/level) floor of this building be fitted out as a shop or house of the period, the choice depending on its historical use in 1859, as established by further research. These exhibits to be viewed by visitors through the windows

from the street. In other words, visitors will not actually enter the house, thus reducing protection problems. It is also recommended that the other floors of the building be stripped down to a shell, leaving only the second floor as space in which exhibits may be stored in the event of a flood.

Under this plan, as is apparent, all interior restoration work would therefore be strictly limited to the first (street level) floor of Building No. 15.

Charles W. Snell

Charles W. Snell,
Historian (Park Supervisory)

January 30, 1958