

HISTORIC GROUNDS REPORT 001279

PART II (PORTION) 22

LANDSCAPE DATA SECTION DOP

ON

PORTIONS OF SHENANDOAH AND POTOMAC STREETS
AND THE ARSENAL SQUARE

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Prepared by

Bruce B. Myers

Landscape Architect

May 1965

National Park Service, Eastern Office, Design and
Construction, Division of Landscape Architecture

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This report deals primarily with the Arsenal Grounds, a portion of Shenandoah and Potomac Streets, and related landscape features in this vicinity of Harpers Ferry. Existing physical evidence of historic grounds conditions for this period (1859-1865) is very limited due to the numerous changes that have engulfed the town, the people, and the nation during the past hundred years.

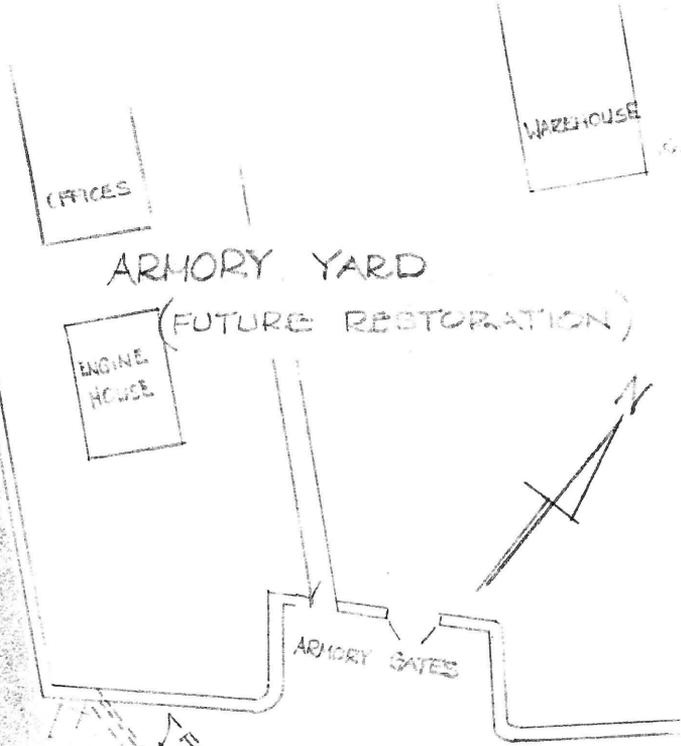
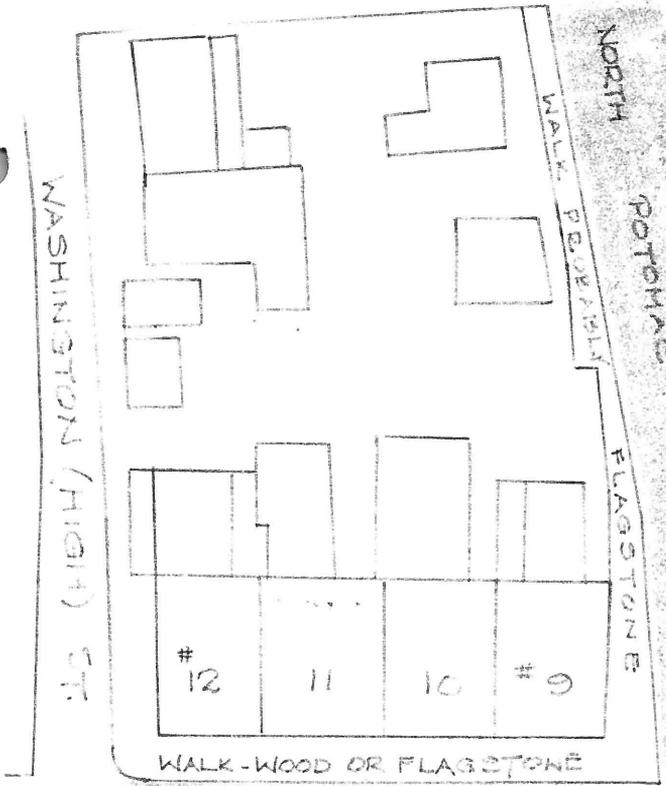
The landscape data that this report attempts to clarify includes: streets, pavings, walks, gutters, fences, walls, lamp posts, trees, shrubs, grassing, benches, and related landscape features.

On the following page an unnumbered vicinity map indicates the limit of work that can be included at this time. The reader should also consult the Historical Base Map - 1859 (NM-HF 3021) and Plan of Existing Conditions, February 1958 (NM-HF 3016).

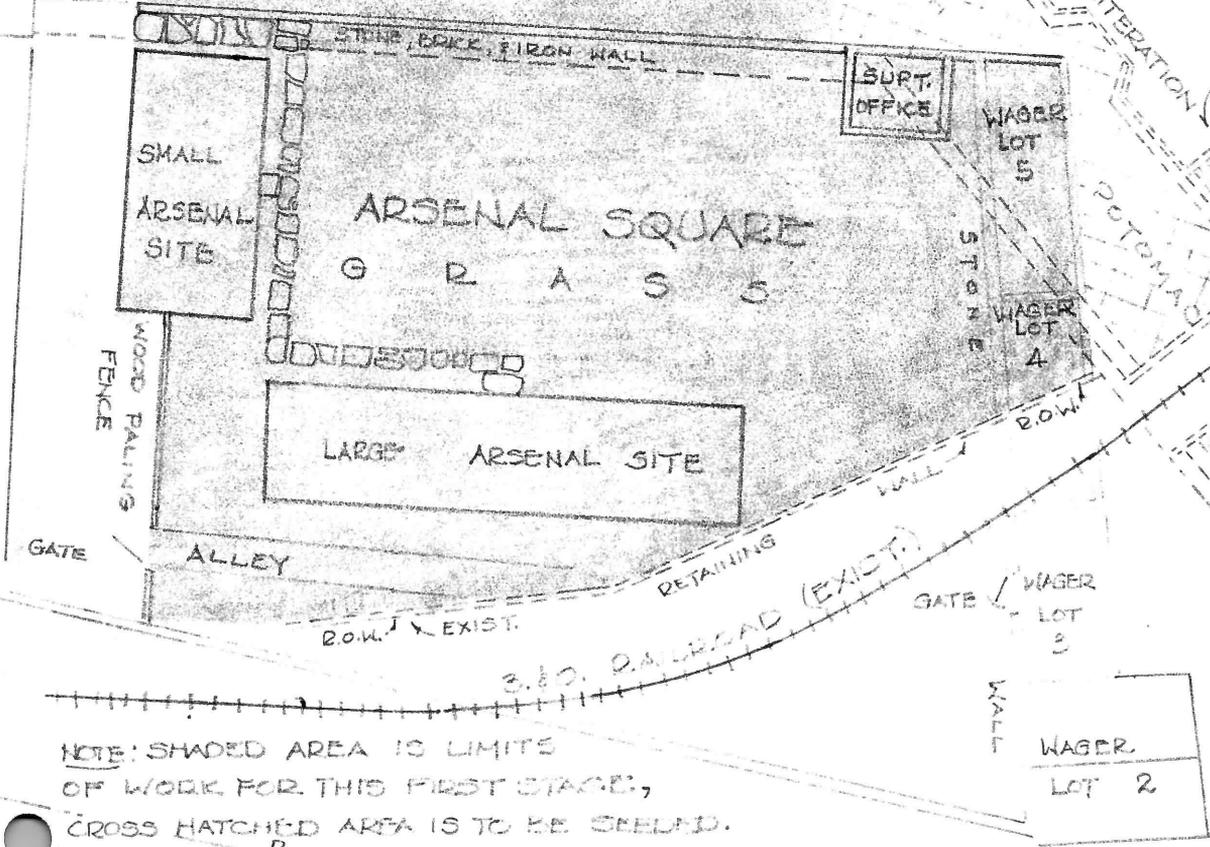
The Arsenal Square was fenced on the east, along Wager Ferry Lots Nos. 2, 4, and 5, by a high stone wall that had been erected in 1825-¹26. A gate in that wall led out into Potomac Street, crossing over Wager Lot No. 3 to reach the street. The Square was walled in on the south side, along the Winchester and Potomac Railroad tracks by a high stone wall that had been erected in 1856-57. In 1857, the Square was enclosed on the north, or Shenandoah Street side, by a brick pier and iron paling fence.² This wall is no longer standing, but archeological excavations were conducted in May 1965. The wall may be seen in the 1859 photograph (see H.F. Neg. 90).

¹ Smith, Arsenal Report, p 13.

² Smith, Arsenal Report, pp 26-27.



S. H E N A N D O A H S T.



NOTE: SHADED AREA IS LIMITS OF WORK FOR THIS FIRST STAGE;
 CROSS HATCHED AREA IS TO BE SHELDED.
 R.O.W.

GROUND'S RESTORATION - FIRST STAGE

HARRERS FERRY R/R N. H. P.

5/05 NOT TO SCALE R.O.W. BEM

A wood paling fence enclosed the Arsenal Square on the west side, extending from the rear of the small arsenal to the railroad embankment. From contemporary Army Reports, it is known that the Arsenal Grounds were planted in grass and six or seven shade trees were situated within the Square in 1859, but their location is not known. Underground pipes conveyed water from the U. S. Canal, located in the Musket Factory Yard, to the Arsenal Square for fire fighting purposes.³

In 1834, Shenandoah Street was macadamized and the sidewalks and gutters altered. The water from the hill near the Harpers Ferry Hotel (which was located on the Wager Lot No. 15, Subdivisions 1, 2, and 3) was carried through the Arsenal Square to the river in a new stone culvert. The particulars concerning this work are contained in the contract between Superintendent Rust and William McDonald, the contractor. The contract reads in part:

The said McDonald agrees to grade that portion of the street extending from the termination of the present pavement near the pay office to the pump on Potomac Street, and to macadamize the same with 12" of good materials.

The said McDonald further agrees to insert good and substantial curbstone, the same may be required by the Superintendent and to construct such culverts as may be necessary (under the direction of the Superintendent) to convey the water to the river.

³Smith, Arsenal Report, p 34.

The said McDonald further agrees to excavate the ground through the Pay Master's garden sufficient for a watering from the street to the river, and pave the same and also to exit walls 1-1/2 feet high on each side of the waste.⁴

In 1853, efforts were made to improve the appearance of the Armory, and it is presumed the Arsenal tract may also have been improved.

It was reported as follows:

The roads in the Armory yard⁵ were graded and macadamized, grass plots piled up, graded, and sown with grass seed. Six cast iron lamp posts were put up and furnished with lamps complete.⁶

In 1856-57, fiscal year, \$5,761 was asked and received for enclosing the Arsenal Square. The reasons were: "The present enclosure of the old Arsenal Square requires to be entirely renewed, in consequence of its dilapidated condition, having been constructed in front on Shenandoah Street of condemned musket barrels and bayonets many years ago."⁷

⁴ R. G. 156 OCO Contract Book No. 13, p 233, July 7, 1834, Harpers Ferry Photostatic Collection, V. I., pp 30-31.

⁵ Armory "Yard" as stated in the Army Records is the U. S. Musket Factory on the Historical Base Map 1859.

⁶ Report of the Principal Operations of the Ordnance Dept. during the year ending June 30, 1853, Reel 20, V. 2, P 148.

⁷ Estimates for 1856-57, Photostats, Y. 3, P 63; Virginia Free Press, IX Jan. 17, 1856, p 2, c 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Armory Tract - Work cannot begin on this portion until an agreement is reached with the B & O Railroad for the removal of some 16 feet of fill.

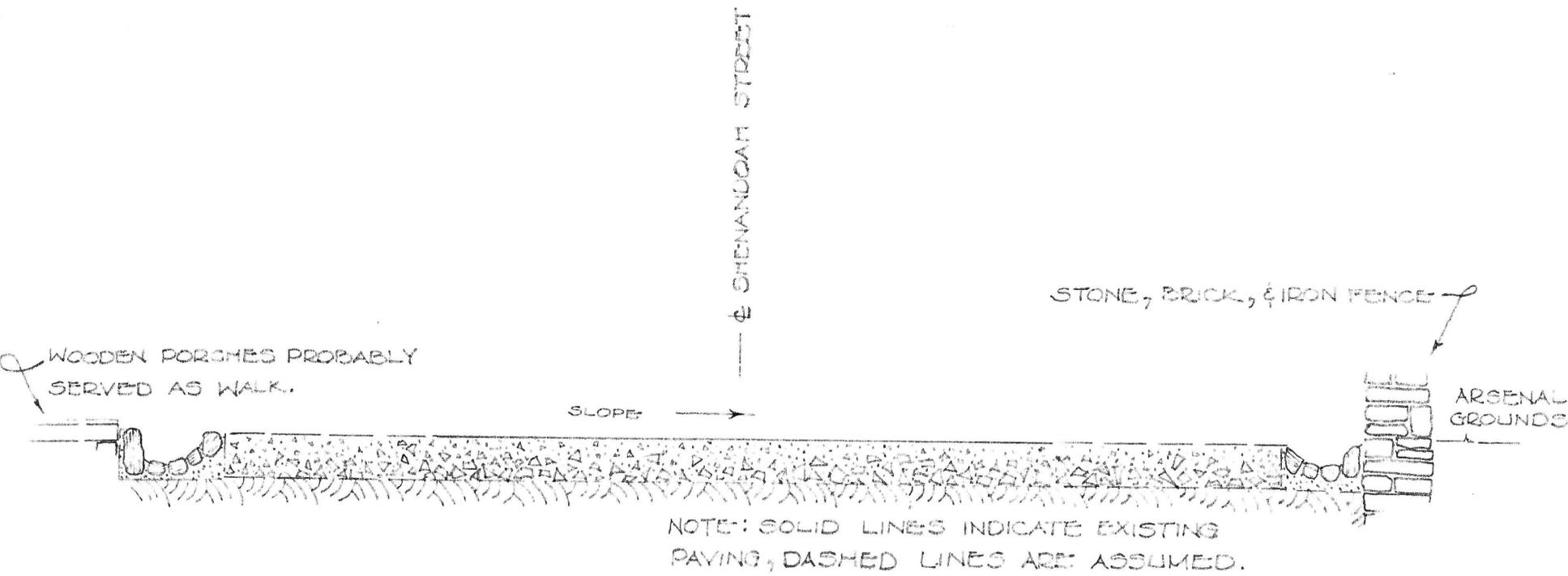
Arsenal Square - The historic stone, brick, and iron wall should be rebuilt (as shown on the 1859 photo HF-Neg. 90) on the original location next to edge of Shenandoah Street, from the Superintendent's office, south to a point near the south end of the small arsenal. The exact termination of this wall is not known at the present time. The stone fence on the south side of lower Shenandoah Street should be rebuilt to approximate ground level, or slightly above. In the future, when the railroad fill is adjusted, the stone wall and gate should be rebuilt to its original height and extended to the Old Winchester and Potomac Railroad retaining wall as shown on the Historical Base Map, 1859, NM-HF 3021, Sheet 1 of 3. The wood paling fence and gate should be rebuilt from the small arsenal to the railroad retaining wall. Exact dimensions of this wooden fence are unknown. The alley behind the large arsenal site should be waterbound macadam. A flagstone walk within the Arsenal Square is known to exist, but the location as shown on the accompanying plan is purely conjectural. More research is needed.

Potomac Street - North Potomac Street should be restored to the original grade as was determined by archeological excavation. Due to the hardness and compactness of the historic roadbed, little if any repair is needed, except to remove minor silt that now covers

the road. The parallel walk should not be restored until the walk on Shenandoah Street is restored. South Potomac Street should be graded and grassed and maintained in this condition until such time that negotiations with the B & O Railroad for relocating the Shenandoah River Spur are fruitful. We are uncertain as to the ownership of the portion of the street that lies within railroad fill. Investigation should be made to determine ownership of such land.

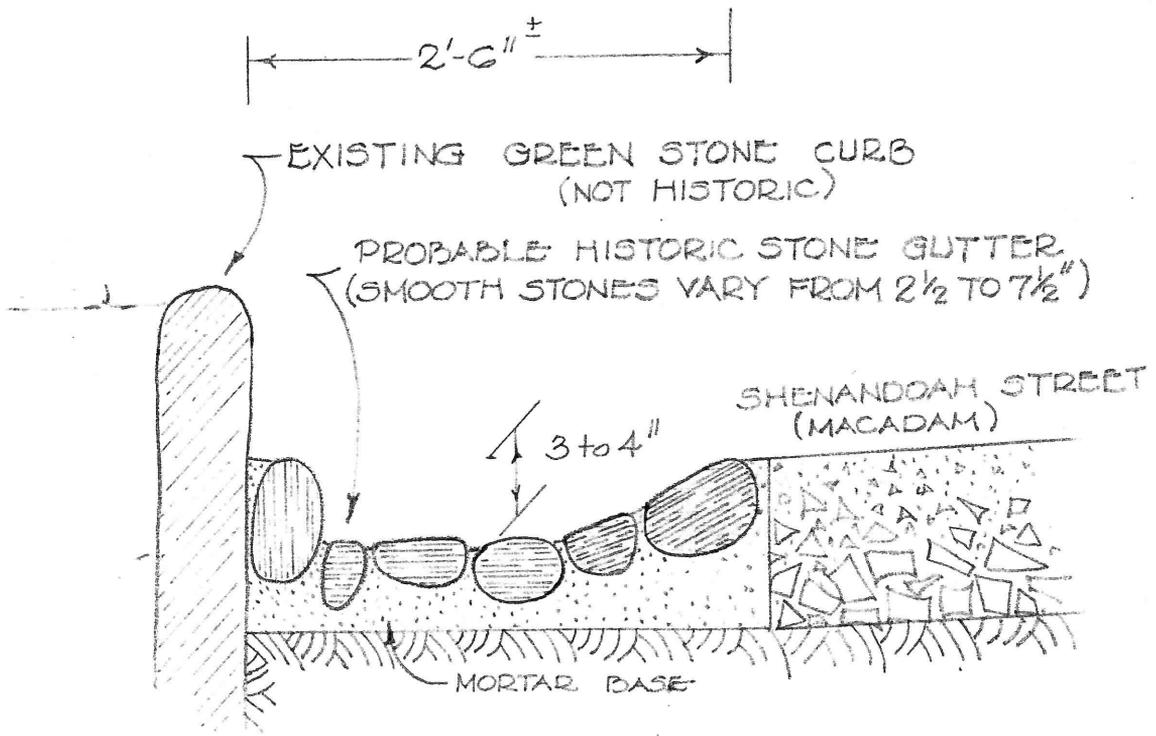
Shenandoah Street - Shenandoah Street should be restored as a waterbound macadam street at grades that were determined by archeological digs. The stone gutter on the east side (Arsenal Grounds) of Shenandoah Street should be restored as they probably appeared in the 1859-1865 period, although there is no concrete evidence to substantiate this at the present time. The wall and stone gutter on the west side of Shenandoah Street should not be done at this time due to the necessary future investigation to Building Nos. 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Further research is needed to determine details of walls, fences, walks, hitching posts, curbs, lamp posts, possible other types of paving materials, plantings, seeded areas, and any other incidental landscape features. When the additional research is completed, the results will be submitted in the form of preliminary drawings.



TYPICAL MACADAM PAVING ON
SHENANDOAH STREET

SCALE: 1" = 5'-0"

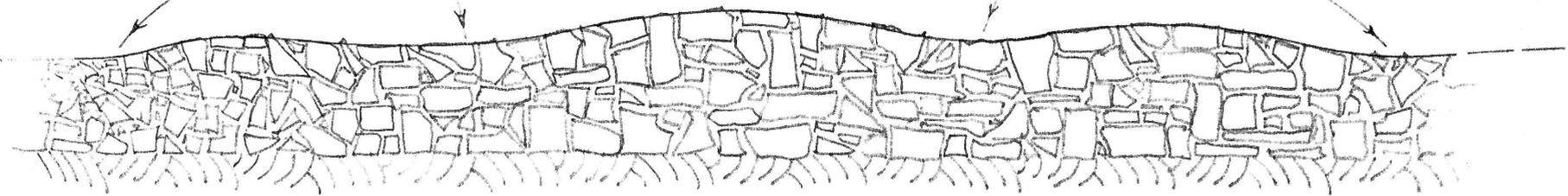


EXISTING TYPICAL STONE GUTTER SECTION

SCALE: 1" = 1'-0"

POTOMAC ST.

WAGON WHEEL IMPRESSIONS



COMPRESSED STONES OF VARIOUS SIZES, VERY HARD AND STABLE ROADBED. PROBABLY 95% STONES, VERY LITTLE FINES OR SOIL. WIDTH OF STREET VARIES AS DOES THE THICKNESS OF PAVING.

TYPICAL SECTION - POTOMAC STREET

SCALE: 1" = 2'-0"

ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

Gate to the Armory Grounds, 1859.

This view is taken from just within the entrance of the Musket Factory Yard and looking south across Shenandoah Street into Arsenal Square. The large 3-1/2 story brick building to the right of the photo is Building No. 9.

Across Shenandoah Street and just to the left of Building No. 9 stands the small arsenal. Note the three windows in the second story on the east side, and also two windows and a door on the first floor (door partially hidden by the tree). A stone, brick, and iron fence encloses the street front of the Arsenal Square, and to the left of the small arsenal is to be seen a portion of the wood paling fence that enclosed the yard on the west side. The lamp post is the basis for the design shown on Illustration No. 4.

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-90

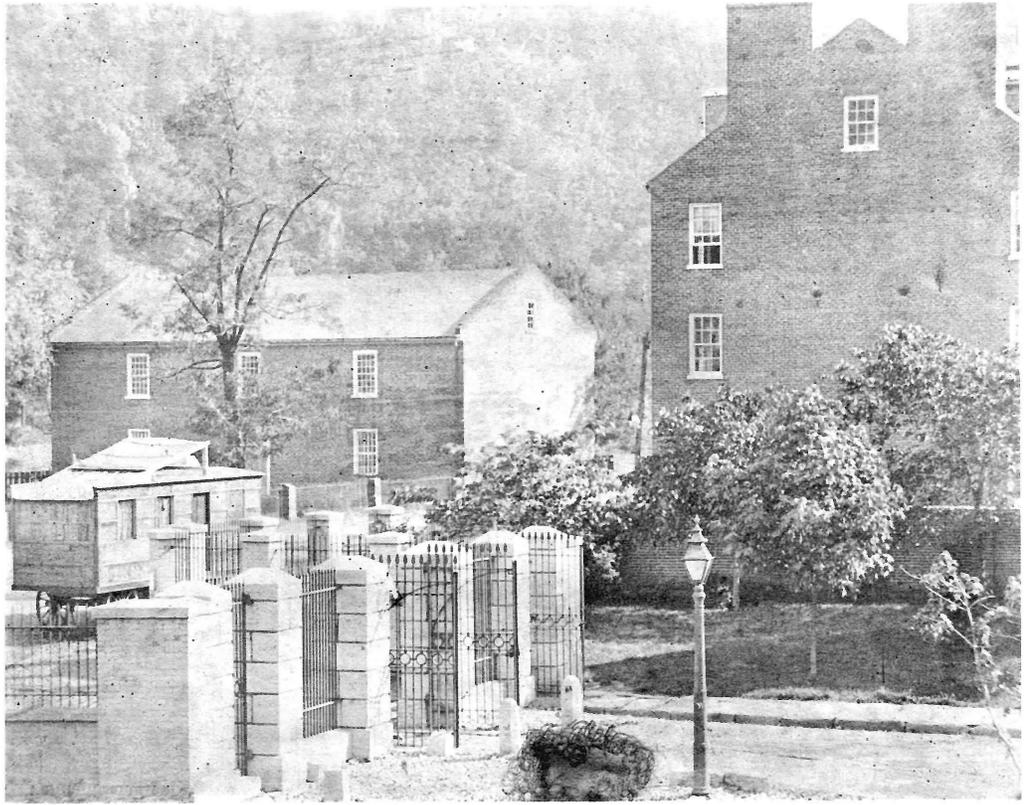


ILLUSTRATION NO. 1

ILLUSTRATION NO. 2

View along Shenandoah Street.

Photograph taken between 1862-1865.

The photograph shows the north side of Shenandoah Street where there appears to be a good sidewalk and possibly a curb. The street itself appears to be dirt. Lamps, hitching posts, and utility pole lines are completely missing in this picture.

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-35

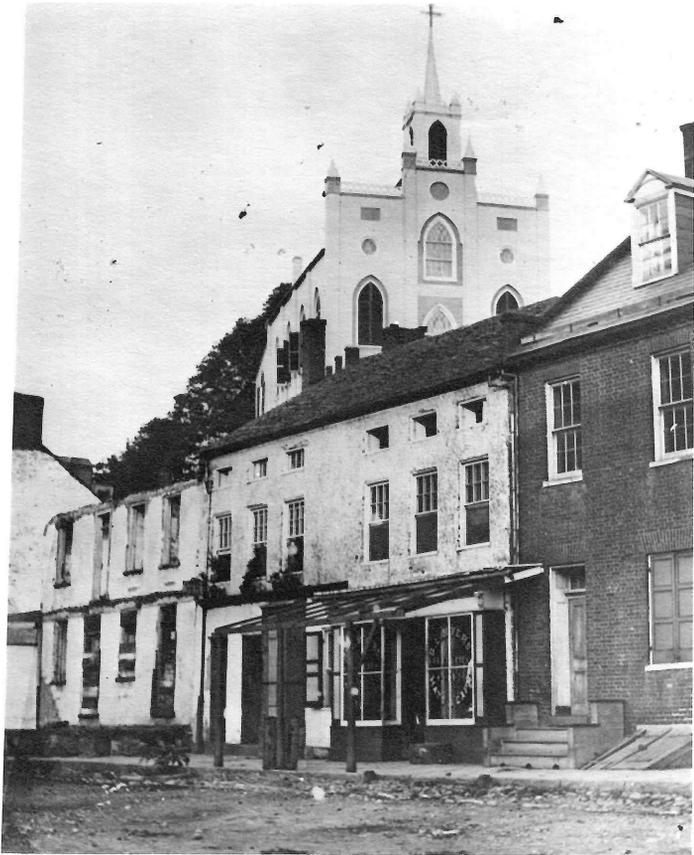


ILLUSTRATION NO. 2

ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

Contraband Camp - Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

(Camp of Negroes on Armory grounds at Corner of Shenandoah
and Potomac Streets).

Taken during Civil War.

National Archives Still Picture Section, U. S. Signal Corps
Collection.

Order No. SC-107368.

Copy from original prints of Civil War period from Estate of
James Bown Jonston, Captain 8th Michigan Cavalry.

This photograph, taken sometime during the Civil War, shows a view of the arsenal tract. The one-story brick building with the slate roof to the left of the photograph is the Superintendent's old office. To the right of the building are a number of temporary wooden buildings erected after the destruction of the arsenals, possibly for the quartering of troops. The large two-story building to the right of the wooden buildings is the Master Armorer's new quarters or Building No. 36. The large three-and-a-half-story brick building at the right of the photograph is Building No. 9.

This photograph confirms Illustration No. 2 that there were no utility pole lines along the street.

Harpers Ferry Negative No. HF-18

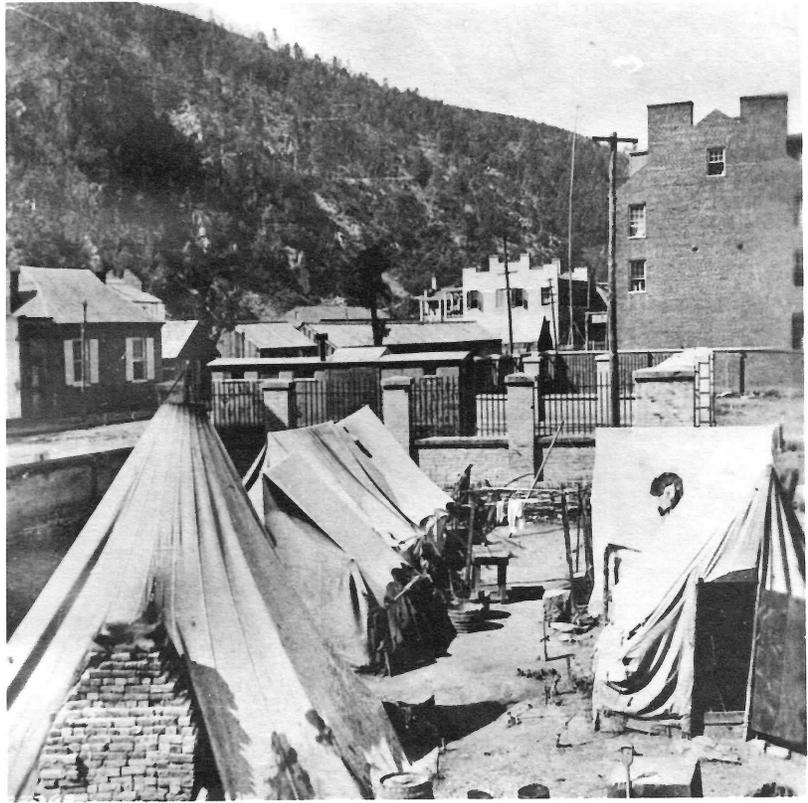
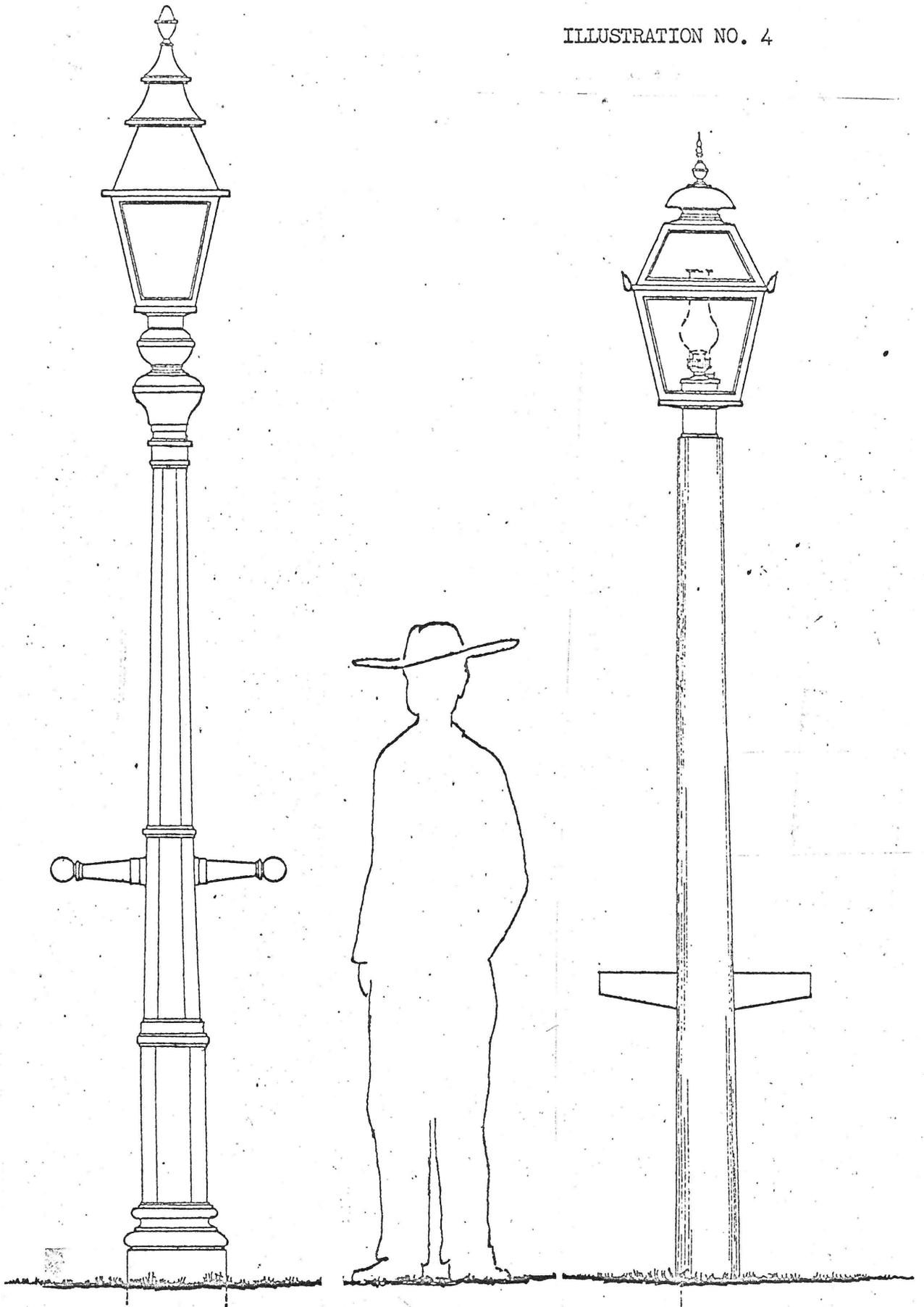


ILLUSTRATION NO. 3

ILLUSTRATION NO. 4

The proportions and details of these Lamp Posts were determined by photographs and are purely conjectural.

An example appears on Illustration No. 1.



IRON LAMP POST

WOOD LAMP POST

HISTORIC GROUNDS REPORT

PART II (POR.)

SHENANDOAH & POTOMAC STREETS

and

THE ARSENAL SQUARE

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

APPROVAL SHEET

Recommended: Joseph R. Painter 7-15-65
Superintendent Date

Recommended: _____
Chief, E.O.D.C. Date

Approved: _____
Regional Director Date

SECTION I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name of Project

Shenandoah & Potomac Streets and the Arsenal Square

B. Proposed Use of Shenandoah & Potomac Streets and the Arsenal Square

It is proposed to restore a portion of Shenandoah and Potomac Streets together with gutters, sidewalks and curbs in their original location and grade as nearly as possible to their historic appearance. The Arsenal Square fences abutting these streets should be restored to delineate the outlines of the square and its relationship to these two streets. The portion referred to above is limited to that in Government ownership lying east of High Street and south of Jones Alley. The proposed use is to provide for the routing of traffic, pedestrian and otherwise, throughout this section of the historic town on the original alignment and elevation.

We should strive to prevent automobile use of these streets. However, it would seem that we must reopen these two blocks to traffic in the near future. Already we are under considerable pressure from the town authorities and owners of souvenir shops, who object to the barricading of these two streets during periods of heavy visitation. We are establishing a precedent in that these portions of streets have been closed for nearly three months at no great inconvenience to anyone. However, political pressures are building for their early opening.

C. Operation of the Streets, Walks, Curbs, and Gutters

Although the Park does not actually own these portions of these city streets, we have the maintenance of them by deed from the State of West Virginia, and from the Town by Act of the Town Council.

We should make every effort to remove or reduce automobile use of these sections of streets for the safety of the public. While closure may not presently be possible, we will try to prevent parking on them in the interest of public safety. We should also attempt to "build in" speed reducing devices at the intersection of the two streets and at the transition from the historic grades at Jones Alley and High Street.

A return to the exact historic surface appearance of water-bound macadam may not be possible. Maintenance costs would be excessive and dust would be a problem both for us and private owners of souvenir and eating places in the immediate vicinity. Some

more permanent and dust free surfacing would be preferable and is desired by the town officials, the State Highway Department, and adjoining property owners. Perhaps an exposed aggregate concrete could be made to approximate the historic appearance.

Shenandoah Street should be extended eastwardly to the railroad property to indicate that it continued on to the Armory under the railroad fill. This will improve the interpretive picture and make it easier to explain the later intrusion.

South Potomac Street from Shenandoah to the point should not be reopened, since its original location lies partly under the railroad fill. Foundations should be brought to ground level and the remaining area should be seeded to grass. Auto traffic to the point should be eliminated.

D. Cost Estimates

A realistic cost estimate cannot be made until a decision is reached on the street surfacing. We suggest that this section be prepared by E.O.D.C.

No exhibits, furnishings, or signs, will be required.

Until further archeological digs resolve some of the questions referred to in Part II, Landscape Data Section, page 4, work should consist of repaving the streets, cobblestone gutters and missing curbs; the restoration of the stone fence along the Arsenal site south of Shenandoah Street to somewhat above ground line; the restoration of the brick walk along this fence; the restoration of the stone fence along the east of the Arsenal Square to somewhat above ground lines; the restoration of a period paling fence and gate along the west side of the Arsenal Square; the restoration of period sidewalks in their missing sections.

SECTION II. HISTORICAL DATA SECTION

The presently known historical data has been well covered in the Archeological Data Section by J. Duncan Campbell and the Landscape Data Section prepared by Bruce B. Myers. Evidence located in the ground by the archeologist agrees with the known historical record.

Since the factual evidence uncovered locates the grades and elevations, and the historical remains of gutters, curbs, street, walks, and foundations, we see little need in further historical search as far as this project is concerned. No new material has been uncovered since the research report "History of the Large and Small Arsenals, 1796 - 1869, Block A, Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, Shenandoah Street" was prepared by Historian Philip R. Smith, Jr. dated December 19, 1958 (revised April 29, 1959), 49 pages.