

D-46

10-23  
(November 1954)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STORAGE

Happers Ferry  
(Area)

FILE CODE:

HISTORICAL STUDY

of

WAGER LOT NO. 13

1837 - 1856

By

Charles W. Snell  
Historian (Park Supervisory)

*Reproduced  
from original*

**B&W Scans**

September 25, 1958

3-25-2005

**IMPORTANT**

This file constitutes a part of the official records of the National Park Service and should not be separated or papers withdrawn without express authority of the official in charge. All files should be returned promptly to the File Room. Employees will be held responsible for failure to do so, which are necessary to protect the official records.

FROM:

TO:

PLEASE RETURN TO  
TECHNICAL SERVICES CENTER  
DENVER SERVICE CENTER  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

HISTORICAL STUDY

of

WAGER LOT NO. 13

1837 - 1856.

WAGER SIX ACRE RESERVATION SERIES

Harpers Ferry National Monument

Prepared by

Charles W. Shell  
Historian (Park Supervisory)  
September 15, 1953  
23 Pages

HF-50

**ATTENTION:**

Portions of this Scanned document  
are illegible due to the poor quality  
of the source document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
<u>SECTION I - INTRODUCTION</u>	1
<u>SECTION II - HISTORICAL DATA</u>	
1. <u>OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, 1835 to 1865.....</u>	2
2. <u>CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING ON LOT 13.....</u>	4
3. <u>USE OF THE BUILDING ON LOT NO. 13, 1868-1855.....</u>	7
4. <u>HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.....</u>	20
5. <u>HISTORICAL PLANS OF THE BUILDING.....</u>	20
6. <u>SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DATA.....</u>	20

## SECTION I - INTRODUCTION

This historical study of Wager Lot No. 13 has been prepared for the following reasons:

1. To check out the locations of various businesses. With the sources available, it has been necessary to establish the use of existing historic structures by utilizing newspaper advertisements and then attempting to locate these businesses in a particular structure. This study therefore establishes the definite location of a number of firms on a particular site at a certain time.
2. The building on Lot No. 13, located adjacent to Bldg. No. 9, was the corner structure at Potomac and Shenandoah Streets, 1837-1856. Data on the building on Lot 13, therefore, may reveal architectural information of value in the restoration of Bldg. No. 9.
3. Wager Lot No. 13 was also connected with the final stages of the physical development and improvement of the Armory, namely the widening of Potomac Street; thus this study also has a bearing on the Armory story.

SECTION II - HISTORICAL DATA

1. OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND, 1835 to 1865

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 [Jr.], deceased."<sup>1</sup> The property thus being divided at Harpers Ferry was commonly known as the "Wager Six Acre Reservation and Ferry Lot," an island of land in private ownership surrounded on all sides by land owned by the United States Government.<sup>2</sup>

On October 10, 1835, the three Commissioners reported to the Court: "To Sarah Ann Swayne, the wife of Noah H. Swayne, we allot and assign the lots following as numbered in the annexed plat and marked N.H.S.: to wit: Lot No. 5-8-10-11-13-16-17-20-24-26-28-31-33-35-40-42-45...48-51 and 55."<sup>3</sup> Thus on October 10, 1835, Wager Lot No. 13 (see blue area on 1835 plat, page 3 of this report) was awarded to Sarah Ann Swayne and this lot remained the property of the Swaynes until 1855.

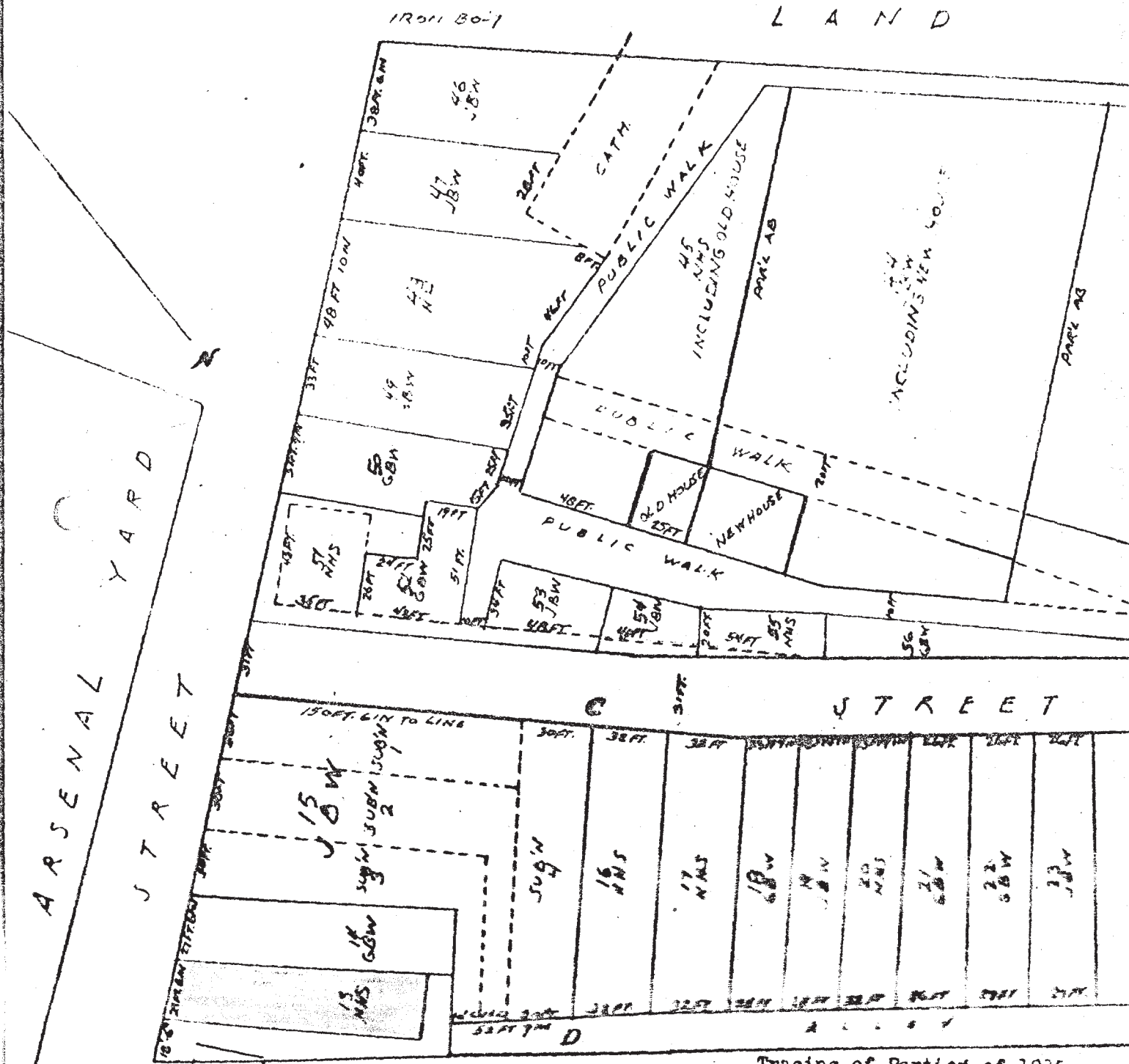
On July 1, 1837, Noah H. Swayne leased Wager Lot No. 13 to John G. Wilson, a merchant of Harpers Ferry, for ten years at an annual ground

1. Gibson, etc. vs. Wager, etc., Decree, Deed Book 29, pp.140-141. Jefferson County Court House, 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 page 3.

3. Deed Book 29, p.141.

PUBLIC LAND



SCALE 1" = 60 FT.

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.



rent of \$120.00 a year. <sup>4</sup> Mr. Wilson held the leasehold to Lot No. 13 from 1837 until 1858.

On December 26, 1855, Noah H. Swayne sold Lot No. 13 to the United States Government for \$2,000, "...Subject to the unexpired term of a Lease for Ten Year,..Granted by Said Noah H. Swayne and Sarah A. Swayne his wife, to John G. Wilson, by Deed of Lease dated on the 1st day of July in the year 1837..."<sup>5</sup>

And finally, after dickering with the Government over the price for his building from July, 1852, to 1855, John G. Wilson, in consideration of the sum of \$5,000, assigned his lease to the U. S. Government on January 31, 1856. This document reads in part: "the leasehold interest or property, situated at the Junction of Shenandoah and S. Cliff Sts (or Potomac Street) in the Town of Harpers Ferry aforesaid, having on it a three storey brick Dwelling & Store, and other buildings known as Lot 13..."<sup>6</sup>

## 2. CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING ON LOT 13

On July 1, 1837, John G. Wilson, who had previously constructed Bldg. No. 45 in 1826, leased Wager Lot No. 13 from the Swaynes. As a part of this lease, Wilson agreed:

"IV. The said Party of the second part [John G. Wilson] within two years from the date above mentioned [July 1, 1837] shall erect on said Lot a brick or stone building covering the whole front thereof [37 feet 6 inches] and at least two Stories high, and at least Forty feet in depth & with the walls of sufficient thickness to sustain another story..."<sup>7</sup>

4. Lease, July 1, 1837, Deed Book No. 22, pp.202-203.
5. Deed of B. & S., December 26, 1855, Deed Book 35, pp.294-297.
6. Assignment of Lease, January 31, 1856, Deed Book 35, p.295.
7. Lease, July 1, 1837, Deed Book 22, pp. 202-203.



Wilson apparently started construction at once, for in January, 1838, he announced: "GOODS AT COSTS...The arrangement I have made, will enable me, after the first of April next, (to relocate) at my new store opposite the Arsenal Yard..." Thus indicating that the building was scheduled for completion in 1838.<sup>8</sup> The house was completed by July of 1838 and occupied at that date.<sup>9</sup>

In 1839, Mr. Wilson, advertising his building for rent, described it as "The Hotel...on Shenandoah Street, opposite the Arsenal, at Harpers-Ferry... It has seventeen well finished rooms, exclusive of the basement story, which is also finished..."<sup>10</sup>

In March, 1841, he announced:

"VALUABLE PROPERTY FOR SALE

Will sell my TAVERN HOUSE in Harpers Ferry, situated immediately on Main Street, opposite the U.S. Arsenal...

The HOUSE is three stories high, with a commodious two story back building annex like Bldgs. No. 8, 10-A, 11-A, and 12-A, and four basement STORIES under the whole, and contains twenty Rooms...

This property is now under an annual rent of \$600, and is insured for an unexpired term of eleven months..."<sup>11</sup>

In October, 1842, he again offered the property for sale, describing it as "that VALUABLE THREE-STORY BRICK HOUSE on Shenandoah Street, Harpers-Ferry, opposite the Arsenal Yard... The House is large and convenient, having 17 good rooms, independent of the rooms in the basement story..."<sup>12</sup>

8. Virginia Free Press, January 4, 1838, p.3, c.3; Wilson, at this date, was located in a store on Block C, Lot 1, Shenandoah Street.

9. Ibid., July 12, 1838, p.3, c.5.

10. Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, May 29, 1839, p.3.

11. Virginia Free Press, March 11, 1841, p.3, c.4.

12. Ibid., October 13, 1842, p.3, c.4; September 5, 1844, p.3, c.4.

In 1845, he advertised:

"FOR RENT.

"I would rent to a good tenant, the dwelling part of my large three story BRICK HOUSE, Opposite the Arsenal Yard. The house is large and well calculated for a Boarding House, having sixteen rooms, independent of two basement rooms and cellars..." 13

In 1846, he put into trust: "...lot of land opposite to the Arsenal Yard, and has upon it the three story brick building (with a two story addition behind the same) a part of which is now occupied by the said J. G. Wilson as a store house..." 14 Three days later, he described the same buildings as a "three-story brick building (with a three-story brick building attached thereto),..." 15

The following maps show the site of Lot 13:

1. "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 No. 2-1835." 16 This 1835 map show a small building situated on the site of Wager Lot 13; this was perhaps Gerard B. Wager's office.
2. "Sketch No. 2, Shewing two practicable locations for the Balto, & Ohio R. Rd. through the Village of Harpers Ferry," 17 probably drawn 1837-38, shows lot 13 as vacant at that date, thus the map was probably drawn in 1837.
13. Virginia Free Press, March 13, 1845, p.3, c.1; March 19, 1846, p.3, c.1.
14. Deed of Trust, April 21, 1846, Deed Book 28, pp.93-94.
15. Deed of Trust, April 24, 1846, Deed Book 28, pp.97-98.
16. National Archives R. G. No. 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers. Fortifications Map File, Maps: Dr. 150, Sheet 82-2.
17. Ordnance Office, Drawer 5, Portifolio No. 5. Photostatic copy of map received from Vicksburg N. M. P.

3. "Map of Harpers Ferry - Prepared in compliance with Letter to Major Symington-April 22, 1848" (reproduced in Harpers Ferry National Monument Master Plan as Drawing No. NM-HF-3000). This map illustrates the relationship of Lot 13 to the Armory Yard and how the building blocked the street.

4. The Plat, dated "September 1, 1848 - Harper's Ferry Armory," also shows how Lot No. 13 block what is now Potomac Street.<sup>18</sup>

5. Plat prepared by Superintendent Henry H. Clowe, July 12, 1855, also illustrates the relation of Lot 13 to the street.<sup>19</sup>

The building occupying Lot No. 13 from 1838 to 1856 fronted 27½ feet on Potomac Street and was about 40 feet deep. It was constructed of brick and was three stories in height, with a collar, and 20 rooms. By 1841, a two story brick annex had been added to the rear of the main structure. These buildings were demolished in 1856.

3. USE OF THE BUILDING ON LOT NO. 13, 1838-1855

On January 4, 1838, John G. Wilson, Dry Goods Merchant and Post Master of Harpers Ferry, whose Store and Post Office, were then located in the building on Block C - Lot 1, Shenandoah Street, announced that after the 1st of April, 1838, he intended to relocate his business at his new building on Lot No. 13.<sup>20</sup> However, as events transpired, Wilson and the Post Office remained at the old stand until about July, 1839.<sup>21</sup>

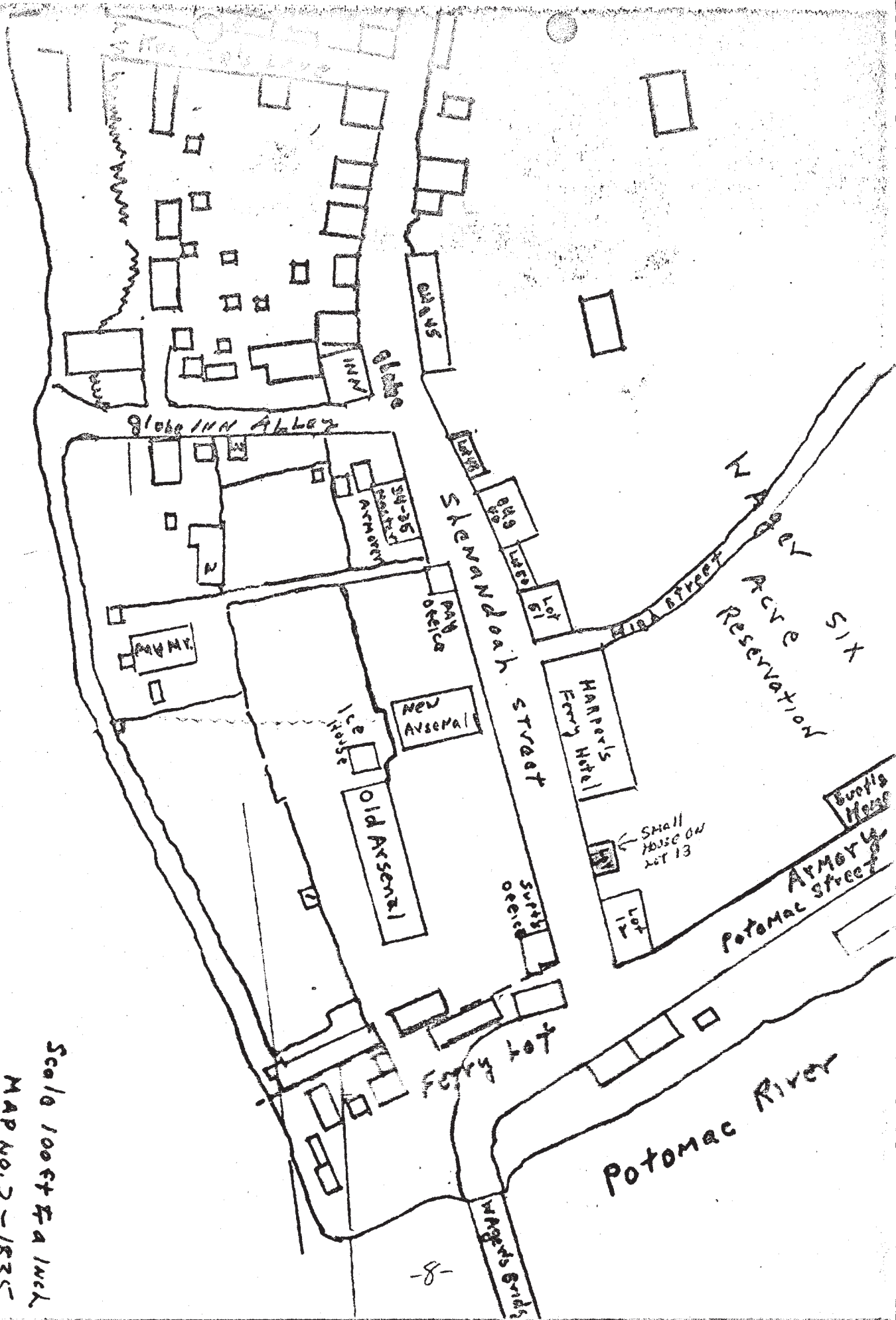
18. National Archives R. G. 153, War Dept., Ordnance, 69, 1842.

19. National Archives R. G. 133, War Dept., Ordnance, Letters Received, 216-C.

20. Virginia Free Press, January 4, 1838, p.3, c.3.

21. Ibid., August 1, 1838, p.3, c.4.

Scale 100 ft to a inch  
MAP NO. 2-1835





Shenandoah River

W & P. RR Bridge

Wager Bridge

Potomac River

Large Arsenal

Ice House

Small Arsenal

U.S. Hotel

Supt. Office

Street

Harpers Ferry Hotel

Lot 51

Lot 12

Lot 13

Government House

HIGH STREET

Route of B & O R.R. & Government Wall Erected

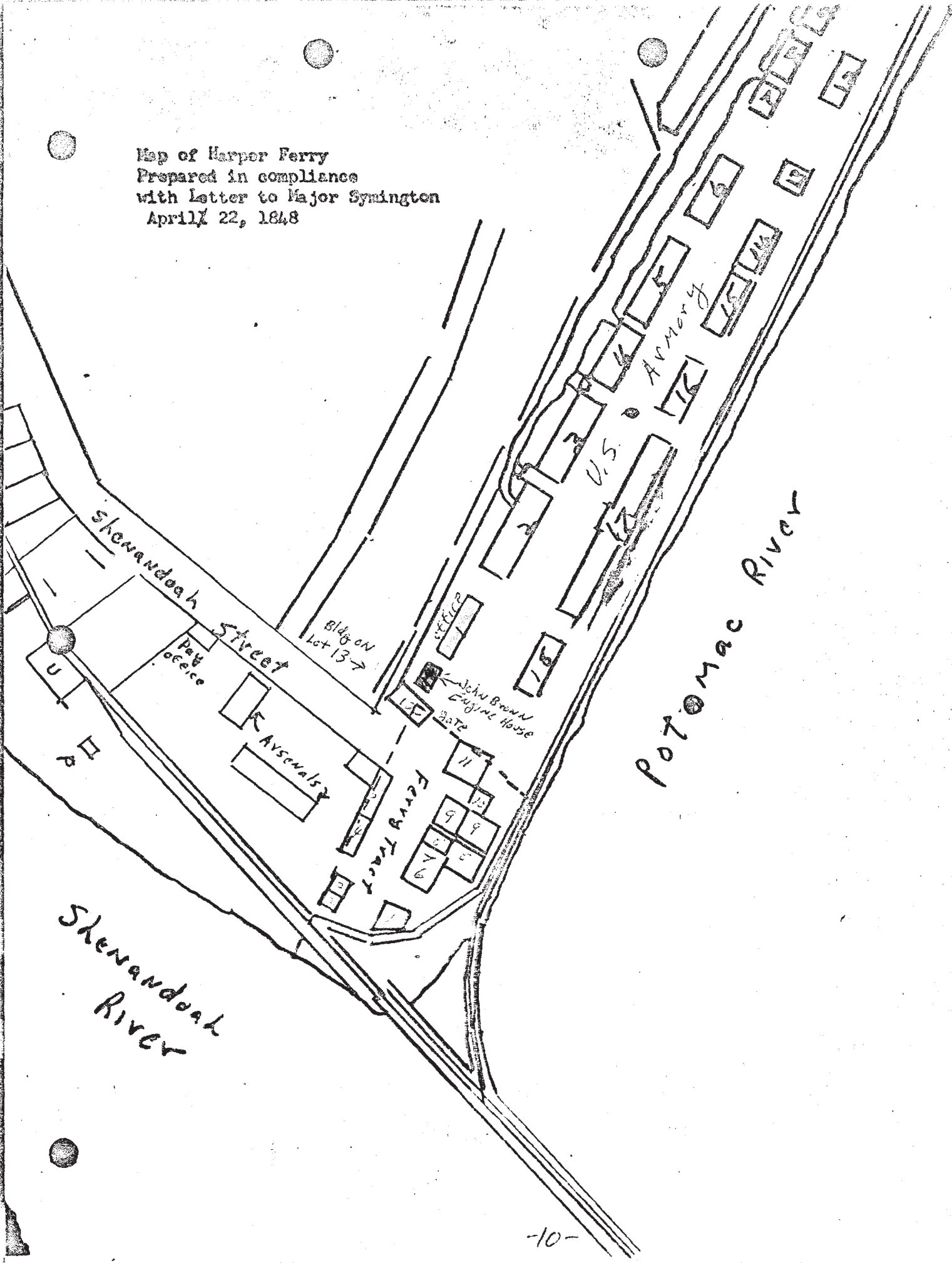
Shops

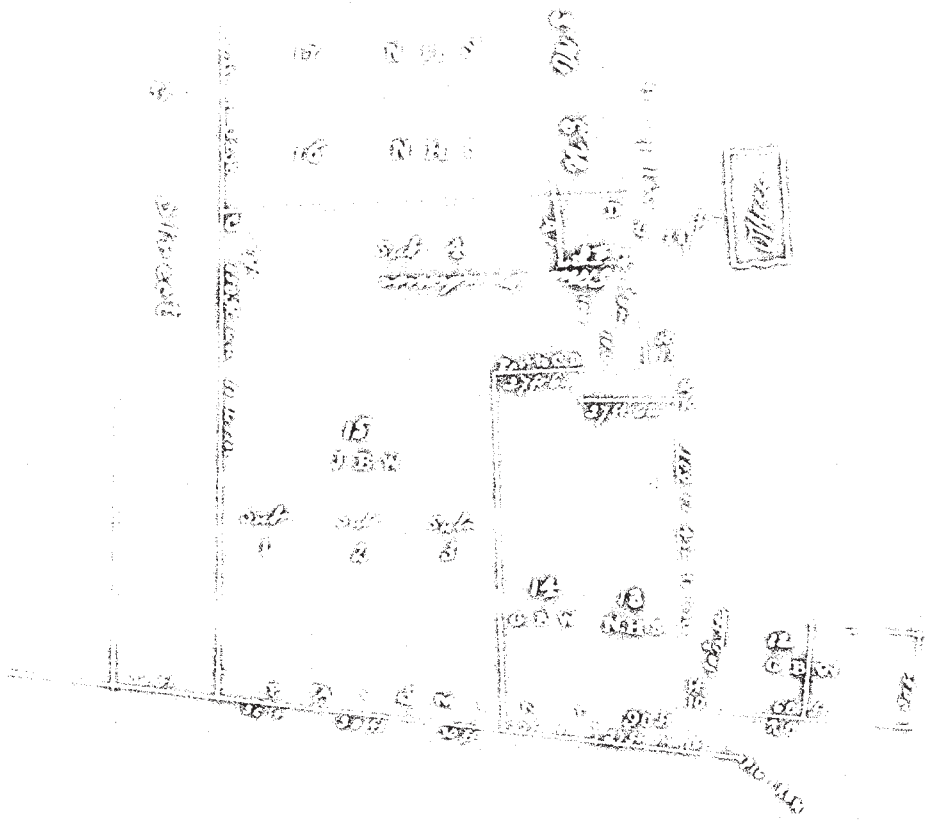
WALK

Sketch probably drawn 1837-38  
1836-37

Traced From:  
No. 2, Sketch. Shewing two practicable Locations for  
the Balto. & Ohio R. Rd through  
the village of Harpers Ferry.  
Scale 100 ft = 1 inch  
Ordnance Office, Drawer 5, Portfolio 1, No. 5

Map of Harper Ferry  
Prepared in compliance  
with Letter to Major Symington  
April 22, 1848





*Handwritten notes in cursive script, likely describing the plan or providing instructions.*

*Additional handwritten notes or a signature at the bottom left of the page.*





Thus in July, 1838, Isabella Fitzsimmons advertised:

"FITZSIMMONS'S HOTEL

"Isabella Fitzsimmons respectfully announces to her friends and the public, that she has opened a

HOUSE OF ENTERTAINMENT

in the brick building recently erected by Mr. J. G. Wilson, immediately opposite the Arsenal, where every attention will be afforded to persons favoring her with their custom.

HENRY BROWN, Agent." 22

In May, 1839, John G. Wilson announced:

"TO RENT

"The Hotel, recently occupied by Mrs. Fitzsimmons; on Shenandoah street, opposite the Arsenal, at Harpers Ferry-is now for rent, to a good tenant.

"The capacity of this house, to accommodate the community, is very great-it has seventeen well finished rooms, exclusive of the basement story, which is also finished; and convenient to the works of internal improvement-now in progress, at and near Harpers-Ferry. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, will commence in a few weeks, the prosecution of their line of road, beginning at Harpers-Ferry, which will assemble at that place, a source of profit to a well kept hotel..." 23

The Post Office and Post Master Wilson, from August, 1839, until June, 1841, were located in Bldg. No. 45; at this latter date, James A. Fitzsimmons was appointed Post Master and Mr. Wilson continued his Dry Good store in Bldg. No. 45 until April, 1843.

From November, 1839, through January, 1840, Mr. Wilson again advertised:

"FOR RENT. The subscriber offers for rent, his new and commodious House, known as the HARPERS FERRY HOTEL-situated on Shenandoah Street, opposite the United States Arsenal, in the town of Harpers Ferry. The situation of the House is highly eligible as a TAVERN STAND, being contiguous to the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road, and on the most business street in the place..." 24

22. Virginia Free Press, July 12, 1838, p.1, c.6.

23. Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, May 29, 1839, p.3.

24. Ibid., January 6, 1840, p.4.

In March, 1840, Mr. Tiball announced:

"SHAVING AND HAIR DRESSING.

"The subscriber...informs his old customers..., that his Shop is now in the basement story of Mr. Wilson's new house, formerly kept as the Harpers-Ferry Hotel. With a determination to accommodate, and fine lot of sharp Razors, he intends to shave very close for cash..." 25

In December, 1840, a second business occupied the building:

"OYSTER! OYSTERS!

"The subscriber will be happy to furnish persons from the country with OYSTERS, Fresh from Baltimore every day, in any quantity they may desire, either in Cans, or by the bushel. Having made arrangements to be regularly supplied the Winter, persons visiting Harpers-Ferry will please call, Up-Stairs, in Wilson's new Building, opposite the Arsenal, where they can have them cooked in all the different varieties of the Eastern Cities--with neatness, comfort, and good order, to enjoy them. The public's obedient Servant, WILLIAM CLARKE." 25

Mr. Clarke apparently rented the building from December, 1840, through 1841 as a tavern at an annual rent of \$600 a year. A Deed of Trust for Lot No. 13, made by Wilson April 14, 1841, describes the building as a "...Tavern House, ...now occupied by William Clark..." 28

In September, 1841, another firm located itself in the building:

"HERE WE COME AGAIN!  
TAILORING.

N. C. ALLISON

Respectfully informs his old friends and the people at large, that he has returned from the West, and has again commenced business at Harpers-Ferry, in the second floor room of John G. Wilson's three story building, directly opposite the public arsenal, where he will be happy to receive the orders of his friends in the Tailoring Line. His work shall be done in the neatest and best manner, and on short notice. Give us a call, and look at the Fashions, &c." 29

25. Harpers Ferry Constitutionalist, July 20, 1840, p.1.
26. Virginia Free Press, December 10, 1840, p.3, c.3.
27. Ibid., March 11, 1841, p.3, c.4.
28. Deed of Trust, April 14, 1841, Deed Book 25, p.9.
29. Virginia Free Press, September 2, 1841, p.3, c.4.

From June, 1842, to June, 1843, the building was occupied as:

"THOMPSON'S HOTEL,  
HARPERS-FERRY, VA.

The undersigned takes pleasure in informing his friends and the public, that he has taken that commodious and eligible

ERICK HOUSE

ON SHENANDOAH STREET,

Opposite the Arsenal Yard, and in an excellent and pleasant location, where he is prepared to accommodate Travellers and others in a very comfortable style.

Persons travelling on the Rail Road, and disposed to remain over night to view the curiosities of the neighborhood, will find this Hotel a very agreeable resting place; and the experience of the proprietor, in several prominent establishments, enables him to assure his customers generally, that every reasonable provision will be made for their comfort.

WILLIAM M. THOMPSON." 30

In July, 1843, Samuel Gibson informed the public:

"GROCERIES AND  
FANCY GOODS.

I am receiving and offer for sale, in the front room of the house formerly occupied by Mr. Wm. M. Thompson as a tavern, a large stock of Groceries and Fancy Goods, comprising nearly every article in the line, with the exception of liquors. I deem it unnecessary to say much about quality and prices, as persons directed to purchase will use their own judgement—I am determined to sell at a moderate profit.

N.B. I have on hand a lot of BACON, well cured and closely trimmed." 31

32

Mr. Gibson apparently remained in business at this stand until 1845.

In January, 1845, it was announced that James A. Fitzsimmons had been removed as Post Master of Harpers Ferry and that John G. Wilson was appointed

33

ed in his place. Thus the Post Office and Wilson's store, in January, 1845, were located in the brick building on Lot No. 13, and from 1845 to

34

30. Virginia Free Press, June 30, 1842, p.3, c.6.

31. Ibid., July 6, 1843, p.3, c.5.

32. Ibid., June 20, 1844, p.3, c.3.

33. Ibid., January 23, 1845, p.2, c.6.

March 13, 1845, p.3, c.1; In a notice to rent the dwelling part on Lot 13, Wilson requests those interested to apply "to the subscriber, living on the premises."



April, 1847, the Post Office and Grocery, Shoe and Hat Store of John G.

35

Wilson continued at this stand.

In April, 1847, a new business occupied Lot No. 13:

"NEW AND BEAUTIFUL STOCK OF  
DRY GOODS, &c.

Robert Russell, opposite the Arsenal Gate, in the room lately occupied  
by John G. Wilson as a store and Post Office, Harpers-Ferry..."

Russell's stock consisted of "Ladies" Dress Goods, Bonnets, Gentlemen & Boy's  
36  
Wear and Domestic Goods."

By October, 1850, Mr. Wilson had again relocated his Dry Goods Store  
37  
in his own building "OPPOSITE THE ARSENAL, SHENANDOAH STREET."

In August, 1852, he advertised:

"A LARGE AND SPLENDID  
STOCK OF GOODS,  
AT COST, FOR CASH ONLY.

The undersigned having sold his Property, including his Store House to  
the Government, has determined to close his business in the Mercantile line.  
He, therefore, offers his extensive

STOCK OF GOODS,

which has been purchased as low as any Stock in the Valley of Virginia, and  
all Fresh Goods, he having been in business only about two years.—This as-  
sortment consists in part of the following articles, viz:  
Plain, Black, Changeable, Plaid, Striped and Figured Silks;  
Silk Tissues of various patterns;  
Illusions, Tarltons, and Sarconets;  
Barages of every quality; Barage De Lains;  
Muslins and Lawns; Mourning Lawns;  
Swiss, plain, and figured Muslins;  
Cambries and Jaconets do.; Poplins;  
Super Curtain Muslins of various patterns;  
Ginghams and Calicoes all patterns and prices;  
Ladies super Linen Hdk'fs. from 10 cts. up;

35. Virginia Free Press, June 19, 1845, p.3, c.3; March 19, 1846, p.3, c.1.

36. Ibid., April 29, 1847, p.3, c.3.

37. Ibid., October 18, 1850, p.3, c.2; April 25, 1851, p.3, c.1.

"Gentlemen's Linen and Silk Hdk'fs;  
 Colored and Black Cravats;  
 Crape and Cashmere Shawls of various sizes and prices;  
 Taibet and Barage Shawls, of various sizes and prices;  
 Figured and plain bobinets;  
 A large assortment of Dress Trimmings;  
 Silk Laces and Fringes;  
 French-worked Collars;  
 Ladies Kid, Silk, and Lisle Thread Gloves;  
 Gentlemen's Kid and Silk Gloves;  
 Parasols and Umbrellas;  
 Ladies' Silk, Cashmere, Lambs-Wool and Cotton Hose;  
 Gentlemen's Lambs Wool Hose;  
 Super Black Cloths and Cassimeres;  
 Do Fancy cassinetts at very low prices;  
 Silk Velvet, Satin, Figured Silk and Marsailles Vestings;  
 Tweeds of all colors and prices;  
 Super White, Red and Yellow Flannels;  
 Canton Flannels; Domestic of every description and colors; Silk and Fancy  
 Bonnets;  
 A large assortment of Fancy and Plain Ribbons, Artificial Flowers, Cape Tabs,  
 Combs and brushes and almost every article in the fancy way.

CHINA AND QUEENSWARE.

Among which are several handsome Tea Sets.—A good assortment of Hardware,  
 Cutlery, Carpenters' Tools, &c., Waiters, Locking Glasses and tin Ware.

GROCERIES.

I have a large stock of Groceries all of which are of the best quality.  
 A large lot of Ladies and Children Shoes; Silk and Leghorn Hats, Kossuth  
 and Wool do; Caps of every description; all of which will positively be sold  
 at COST for CASH, as I am determined to close up my business.

Those who desire to get good bargains are respectfully invited to call  
 soon and judge for themselves...

N.B. Those who know themselves to be indebted to me, are respectively  
 requested to call and settle their accounts." 38

Mr. Wilson had offered to sell his house to the Government but as they  
 were far apart from agreeing on a price for the property, Wilson continued  
 his business at this stand until January, 1855.  
 39

38. Virginia Free Press, August 19, 1852, p.3, c.1.

39. Ibid., October 8, 1853, p.3, c.2; April 20, 1854, p.3, c.2; November 23,  
 1854, p.2, c.3; June 21, 1855, p.4, c.3.

In December, 1855, Mr. Wilson announced:

NOTICE.

Having sold my Dwelling and Store House to the United States, and being bound to surrender immediate possession, I must necessarily close my mercantile business. Those who are indebted to me, by note or current account are respectfully requested to settle the same, in such manner as to enable me to close my business without delay." 40

On January 31, 1856, John G. Wilson sold his leasehold to Lot No. 13 to the United States Government for \$5,000.

In 1857, the newspaper reported: "Died at Harper's Ferry, on Friday, 20th Ultimar. (February, 1857), Mr. John G. Wilson, in the 70th year of his age." 41

Removal of the Bldg. on Lot 13

The estimate of funds required for the Service of the Ordnance Department for the fiscal year commencing 1st July, 1855, and ending 30th June, 1856, contained the following items regarding Harpers Ferry Armory:

"10. Removing obstructions in N. Cliff street (now Potomac Street) on the musket factory Canal, viz. purchase of leasehold building which obstructs N. Cliff Street at its junction with Shenandoah Street (\$5,000) and of the revision in fee of the lot (No. 13) on which this building stands (\$2,000)..."<sup>42</sup>

The justification for this request reads in part: "10. These buildings so obstruct this street on the south side of the musket factory that their removal is indispensable to the proper grading and cleaning of that street, which under the present circumstances, in summer, is very injurious to health

40. Virginia Free Press, December 13, 1855, p.2, c.7; January 1, 1856, p.4.

41. Ibid., March 5, 1857, p.2, c.6.

42. National Archives R. G. 156, Microfilm Reel #20, Vol. 7, p.714.



43

as well as inconvenient to the public works."

On January 11, 1856, in discussing the final stages of the purchase of Wilson's leasehold to Lot No. 13, H. C. Craig, Colonel of Ordnance at Washington, D. C., advised the Superintendent of the Harpers Ferry Armory, Mr. Henry Clowe: "Another point I deem essential in this case, viz, That Mr. Wilson shall remove entirely everything out of the House & Store, and surrender you the keys, so that you may commence the immediate demolition of the same, before the consideration money is paid..."<sup>44</sup>

Demolition of the house was apparently started at once, for on April 28, 1856, Col. Craig informed Superintendent Clowe:

"Your letter of the 15th instant speaking of the Doors and Door Frames, Windows and Window Frames, taken from the house recently purchased from Mr. Wilson, and asking for authority to sell them at public auction, was referred to the Secretary of War, and his decision has just come to hand: You are hereby authorized to sell them as you propose."<sup>45</sup>

On September 12 and 13, 1856, Colonel Craig inspected the Harpers Ferry Armory and reported to Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War:

"A private building (on Lot 13) which greatly obstructed the street in rear of the Factory, after having been purchased by means provided by Law, has been razed and the street widened at that point. The improvements to the Armory and to the Town is very decided..."<sup>46</sup>

43. National Archives R. G. 156, Microfilm Reel #20, Vol. 7, 316.

44. Ibid., Reel #19, Vol. 9, p.334.

45. Ibid., p.356.

46. Ibid., War Dept., Ordnance Office, Special File Box No. 28, Inspection Report, dated September 14, 1856. In photostatic collection, Harpers Ferry National Monument.

Thus by April, 1835, the house on Wager Lot No. 13 had been removed and Potomac street widened to its present size at that point. In April, 1836, Bldg. No. 9, located on Wager Lot No. 14, therefore, became, for the first time in its history, a corner structure.

#### 4. HISTORICAL PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

No authentic prints of the brick house on Lot No. 13 have been found. General views of this area, and in the 1830's will be found in the "Historic Building Site Survey Report for Wager Lot No. 5, The William J. Stephens Building," dated August 5, 1958, pp.38 and 40. Views, 1857 to 1861, of the site of Lot 13, after the removal of the building and its conversion into a street, will be found on pages 43, and 46 of the same report.

#### 5. HISTORICAL PLANS OF THE BUILDING

No historical plans of the 1838-1855 house on Lot No. 13 have been located and it is highly unlikely that any will ever be found.

#### 6. SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DATA

##### A. Ownership of the Land, 1835 to 1865

1. October, 1782, to October 9, 1835, owned by the Wager family.
2. October 10, 1835, to December 26, 1855, owned by Noah H. and Sarah Ann Swayne.
3. December 26, 1855, until after Civil War, owned by United States Government; purchase price, \$2,000.
4. Lease, July 1, 1837, to January 31, 1856, lot leased by Swaynes to John C. Wilson at annual ground rent, 1837-1847, of \$120.00.
5. January 31, 1856, to after Civil War, Wilson's leasehold acquired by United States Government for \$5,000.

6. Total Spent by U. S. to acquire Lot No. 13, \$7,000.

B. Construction of Elders, on Lot No. 13

The house on Lot No. 13 was erected in 1837-38 by John G. Wilson, being occupied in July, 1838. The structure was a three, probably  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , story brick building designed originally for use as a hotel. The building fronted  $27\frac{1}{2}$  feet on Shenandoah Street and was about 40 feet deep. In 1839, it contained 17 rooms and a finished cellar. By March, 1841, a two story brick annex had been added to the rear of the main building and the house is described as having four rooms in the basement and 20 rooms in the remainder of the structure. These buildings were demolished in April, 1856, by the United States Government for the purpose of widening Potomac Street.

C. Use of the Building on Lot 13, 1838-1855

1. July, 1838, to April, 1839, "Fitzsimmons' Hotel," operated by Mrs. Isabella Fitzsimmons. Henry Brown, Agent.
2. May, 1839, to January, 1840, "Warpers Ferry Hotel."
3. March, 1840, Easement occupied by Mr. Tikall as Barber Shop.
4. December, 1840, through 1841, Tavern of William Clarke at an annual rent of \$600. September, 1841, room on second floor, the tailoring shop of N. O. Allison.
5. June, 1842, to June, 1843, "Thompson's Hotel," operated by William M. Thompson.
6. July, 1843, to December, 1843, Dry Goods store of Samuel Gilson.
7. January, 1845, to April, 1847, Post Office and Dry Goods Store of John G. Wilson, Post Master.

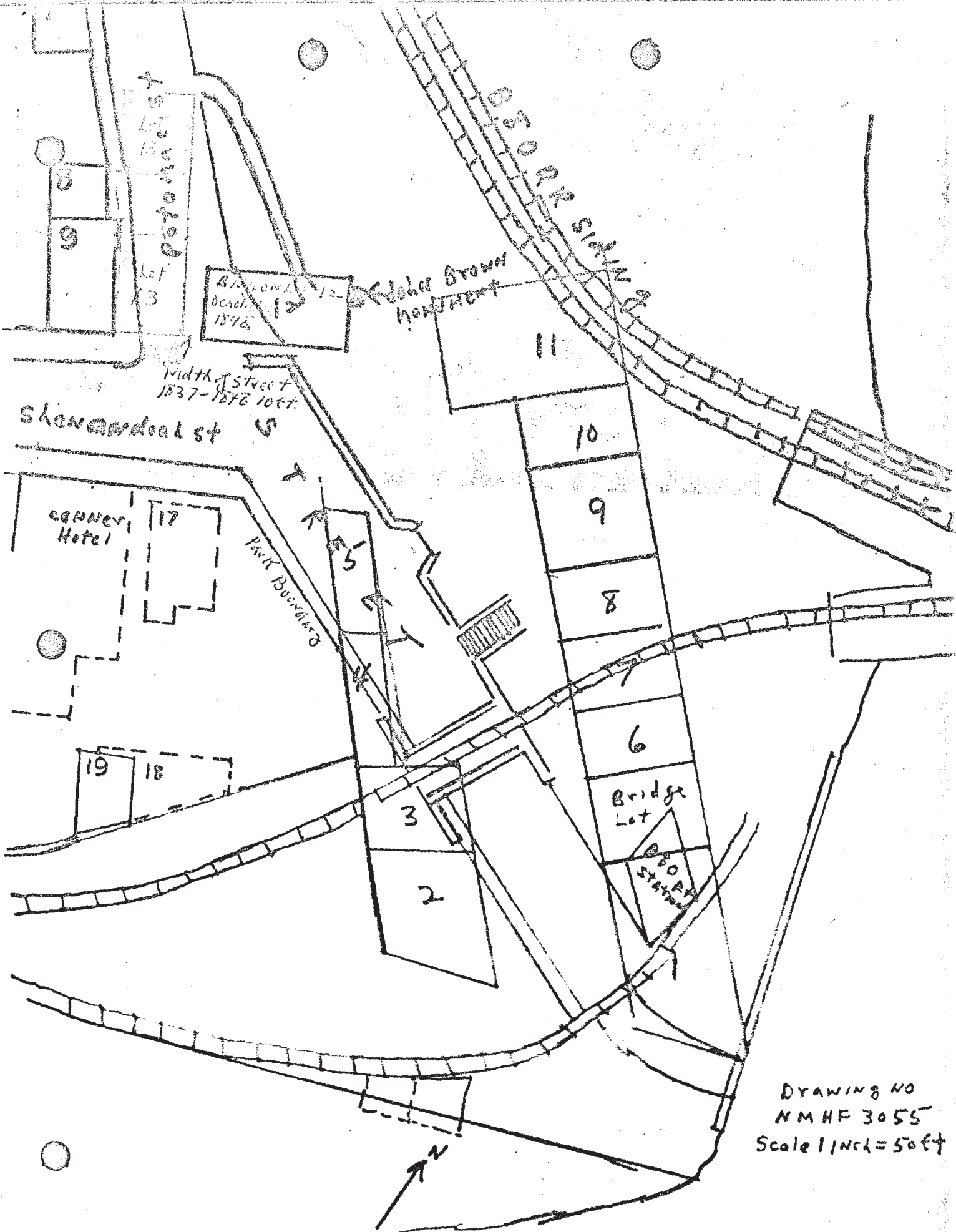
8. April, 1847, to September, 1850, Dry Goods Store of Robert Russell.
9. October, 1850, to December, 1855, Dry Goods Store of John C. Wilson.
10. January 31, 1856, lot purchased by U. S. and by April, 1856, building had been demolished and the lot was made into what is now Potomac Street.

D. Remarks

For the location of the buildings that once occupied Lot 13 and their relationship to Bldg. No. 9 and the present Potomac Street, see the tracing made from Drawing No. MM-NF-3055, which appears on the next page of this report.

(Sgd) CHARLES W. SNELL

Charles W. Snell  
Historian (Park Supervisory)  
September 25, 1953



DRAWING NO  
 NMHF 3055  
 Scale 1/4" = 50 ft



