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# AN ETHNOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT STUDY OF HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

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# ETHNOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

## Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this ethnographic overview and assessment is to identify the traditional ecological, cultural, and historic activities and associations with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. This study reviews and summarizes existing ethnographic information on park resources traditionally valued by stakeholders, then evaluates these data and identifies areas where additional research is needed. In the course of this project we identify the groups and communities whose collective history and activities are attached to the landscape in and around the park. The study aims to provide data that can inform park planning, management, and interpretation, and help the park relate its mission and resources to the various groups that have a stake in the park. In addition, the ethnographic overview and assessment serves as a starting point for park staff and scholars, as it identifies gaps in ethnographic and historical data and recommends areas for further research. Though the communities, traditions, and associations described in this study may change over time, this report provides a baseline for understanding the diverse peoples and activities that are currently associated with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Research for this study took place between October 2014 and September 2016. Over the course of our investigation, we consulted a variety of sources including archival written records, oral histories, and published materials. We also conducted nine semi-structured interviews with local residents and held informal conversations with those who had relevant and/or expert knowledge of the Harpers Ferry area, including its history, its residents, its landscape, and traditional activities that take place there. Based on this research, we were able to develop an overview of the historical processes that shaped the landscape and communities in and around the park. This history includes the Native American occupation of the land, contact with European settlers (16th and 17th centuries), the period of intensive settlement and agriculture (18th century), the industrial period (19th century), the post-industrial pre-park period (20th century), and the present era. It is clear from this historical review that Harpers Ferry's economic, political, and social development was shaped by its agricultural, industrial, and tourism activities, as well as major events such as the introduction of the railroad, the devastation of the Civil War, and the establishment of the National Historical Park. We document the ways in which local communities interact(ed) with the Harpers Ferry landscape both before and after the establishment of the park and identify resources within the park that are significant to the lifeways and traditions of these communities. Three groups are identified as having clear associations with the park and its resources; they include: (1) The African American population of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar; (2) The Italian quarry workers employed by the Standard Lime and Stone Company; and (3) Representatives of the tourism industry. We also identify ten groups or activities that have demonstrable ties to the park, but are less prevalent than the previous three groups. While we present specific examples of sites and resources of significance, such as schools, churches, neighborhoods, rivers, and farmland, there are likely many others that did not come to our attention during this investigation or that required more in-depth research that we did not have adequate time to pursue. Accordingly, we make several recommendations for topics of further study.





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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



**Figure 1. View of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

As Carl Sandberg wrote in his poem *Landscape Including Three States of the Union*: “Harpers Ferry is a meeting place of winds and waters, rocks and ranges” (1970:364). The description of Harpers Ferry as a “meeting place” is particularly apt, as the town of Harpers Ferry and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park are places of convergence. Located in a region characterized by the meeting and merging of diverse elements, the park has long held a reputation as a place to behold many sights simultaneously. It is here that one can see the union of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and the forested Blue Ridge Mountains with its fertile valleys below [see Figure 1]. Here is where three counties (Washington, Loudoun, and Jefferson) and three states (Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia) come together. The historic town of Harpers Ferry has embodied a variety of characteristics as well, by turns industrial and quaint, desolate and bustling, sleepy and booming. Today, the historic town sits alongside big box stores, subdivisions, and a rapidly developing county aided by multiple interstate highways. While this region has long been a site of agricultural production, manufacturing, service, and tourism industries now comprise a large part of the economy as development expands west from Washington, D.C.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is also a place where private and federal jurisdictions and interests intersect. Local residents are literally or figuratively touched by the park: geographic proximity, employment, recreation, and industry bring people in contact with the park, and residents and associated

groups have had to adapt to the park's presence. Some residents spoke wistfully about the "old days," before the development of the park and the surrounding area brought in tourists and new residents and disrupted the quiet, tight-knit community that had once existed. Conversely, others praise the park for "cleaning up" Harpers Ferry and preserving cultural and natural resources that would be vulnerable to damage or destruction by development activities taking place in the region.

Perhaps another suitable word to characterize this town is *resilient*. Along with the changes described above, the historic town of Harpers Ferry has dealt with constant disruption and destruction since the early 1800s. Constant flooding and Civil War activity caused varying levels of damage throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to the devastation to their physical environment, residents of Harpers Ferry suffered losses due to economic troubles such as the demise of major industries and the Great Depression. Though Harpers Ferry experienced several periods of hardship and depopulation, businesses and residents always returned to the town—a sign of the community's enduring perseverance and ability to recover and rebuild after each disruption. In spite of these frequent disturbances, local residents have managed to maintain ties to their past, their communities, and their traditional activities. These enduring connections will be further explored in this study.

## Background to the Study



**Figure. 2. Map showing the approximate location of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Created by Catherine Norris, 2009. Courtesy of the National Parks Conservation Association.**

In 1944, Public Law 78-386 established Harpers Ferry National Historical Park as a public national memorial commemorating historical events at or near Harpers Ferry [see Figure 2]. The park contains key features of the historic town of Harpers Ferry, which was an important manufacturing and commercial town from 1800 until the Civil War. Here, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, inventor John Hall



pioneered the successful development of interchangeable gun parts in firearms manufacturing. The operation of the U.S. Armory from the turn of the nineteenth century and the arrival of the railroad and canal in the 1830s fueled tremendous growth and transformed the formerly small, rural village into a full-fledged industrial center.

In 1859 the town was the scene of the divisive John Brown Raid, an event that brought the nation closer to Civil War. Strategically important, Harpers Ferry changed hands several times during that war. “Stonewall” Jackson’s 1862 capture of the town, as well as the 12,693 Union soldiers defending it, was a dramatic prelude to the great battle at Antietam Creek that ended the first Southern invasion of the North. The town and its citizenry suffered greatly during the Civil War; in its aftermath, nearly every public and private building was damaged or destroyed.

The post-Civil War era brought reconstruction, significant industrial growth and development, and a thriving tourist industry. However, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, the town was once again in a state of decline. A succession of failed business enterprises, the inability to adapt to new modes of transportation, and devastating fires and floods effectively removed the town’s industrial base and discouraged tourism. By the 1950s, when the National Park Service acquired the majority of the town, Harpers Ferry was considered a nearly abandoned ruin of its former self.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has evolved and grown over time. At its inception, the Monument’s interpretive program was narrowly focused on John Brown and Civil War history. In 1960, Public Law 86-655 authorized additional properties for the Monument with appropriations as may be necessary for the purchase of these properties. The 1960 Act also authorized the acquisition of the original site of John Brown’s Fort and the old Federal Armory. In 1963, the Harpers Ferry National Monument was designated a National Historical Park.



**Figure 3. Map of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Courtesy of the National Park Service.**

The enabling legislation was further amended in 1974 to authorize additional lands for an interpretive shuttle transportation service and funds for acquisition of lands. In 1980 lawmakers amended the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, providing additional lands and increased the park's authorized acreage to 2,475 acres. In 1989, additional properties were added to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and the acreage ceiling was increased to 2,505 acres.

After a period of significant large-scale restorations of park buildings in the 1980s and 1990s, focus has shifted in recent years to viewshed and battlefield protection. The area surrounding the park underwent rapid development in the 1990s and 2000s, a trend that endangered the park's historical viewscape and ecosystem (NPCA 2009:6). In response to the threat of proposed construction projects such as cell phone towers and housing subdivisions, the National Park Service concentrated on acquiring and protecting historically-significant land around the park (O'Connell 2001:28). Most recently, Congress passed the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Boundary Revision Act of 2004 authorizing the addition of 1,240 acres of Civil War battlefield and viewshed lands to the national historical park. As a result of the legislation, the current acreage ceiling is 3,745 acres, which includes historic structures and monuments, riparian habitats, floodplains, agricultural fields, developed areas, and upland forests [see Figure 3]. The land has many uses, including recreation, agriculture, and tourism. Today, the many restored nineteenth-century commercial and residential structures are considered architecturally significant, and the many more such buildings and industrial structures now represented only by subsurface remains comprise a great archeological resource. An added dimension is provided by the buildings of the former Storer College, illustrating the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and private philanthropy to aid and educate African Americans after the Civil War.

This ethnographic overview and assessment study will trace human involvement with these resources and activities, beginning with Native American occupation and continuing to present day, and identify discrete groups that exist and the ways that they might be tied to specific aspects of the national historical park. The review and evaluation of available data provides information that can be used to enhance relationships between the park and its associated communities.

## **The Study Area**

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is surrounded by three counties in three different states: Washington County, Maryland; Loudoun County, Virginia; and Jefferson County, West Virginia. The following section offers a brief overview of the contemporary demographics of each county to provide context for the ethnographic groups described in this study.

Washington County, Maryland has a population of 147,430 according to the 2010 U.S. Federal Census and is one of the fastest growing counties in the country. The county is majority white with 85.1% of residents identifying as white and 9.6% identifying as Black or African American. The largest employer in the county is health care and educational services. Also according to the 2010 census, 9.5% of the population was living below the poverty line.

To the east lies Loudoun County, Virginia. Loudoun County is the third most populous county in Virginia with 347,969 residents. Sixty-eight percent (68.7%) of the population identifies as white, 7.3% as

Black or African-American, and 14.7% Asian. Internet-related and technology companies are the largest employers in the county, with Verizon Business, Telos Corporation, and Paxfire all having headquarters in the county. Loudoun County has the highest median household income of any county in the United States at \$119,134. This high income can be attributed to the earnings from technology companies.

Jefferson County is the area most commonly associated with Harpers Ferry. It is not particularly populous with 53,498 residents, 91% of whom identify as white and 6% as Black or African-American. The largest industry of employment is education and health services. The tourist industry provides the second highest number of jobs, particularly in accommodation and food services.

For the purposes of this study, the area of principal interest will be within the boundaries of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, as well as those communities that are closest to the park, including those located in Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, Shepherdstown, Bakerton, Halltown, and Millville in West Virginia; Sandy Hook, Maryland; and the Loudoun Heights portion of Loudoun County, Virginia. The study area of this ethnographic overview and assessment will include those lands described above, which contain mountains, waterways, residential areas, and farmland. While ethnographies are park specific, they rarely stay within the legislative boundaries of the park. This is because the proximity to a park does not affect any “deep traditional significance to living communities.” This EOA’s research design, and selection of the three main ethnographic communities, was informed through park participation. Therefore, because of regional migration, it was imperative for UMD researchers to look for members of those established ethnographic communities beyond park adjacent locations. The inclusion of these various areas is necessary to provide a meaningful cultural and historical context for analysis.

## **The Ethnographic Overview and Assessment**

The ethnographic overview and assessment is programmed to identify resources that are culturally and historically associated with park neighbors, a contemporary ethnic group or groups, or entire communities located in or near a park. In the ethnographic overview and assessment, the primary research emphasis is on the collection, evaluation, and analysis of pre-existing data and literature of all types, including demographic, ethnohistorical and ethnographic studies and archival sources that document the associations with, and traditional uses of, resources in the park or surrounding area by park-associated groups. Depending on the availability of pre-existing data, a secondary research emphasis is placed on the collection of information through ethnographic and oral history interviews.

The term “park resources” includes all forms and types of naturally-occurring and human-modified or constructed geographical features, landscapes, ecosystems, species of plants, fish and animals, places, structures and objects. The ethnographic overview and assessment focuses on those resources that have traditional and ongoing significance or importance to peoples and groups and fosters understanding of the people who have formed these attachments and the nature of the connections themselves. This information is used to inform park management and interpretation, and to assist park managers in consultation with the appropriate peoples and groups when particular resources are the subject of management considerations and

decision-making.

The ethnographic overview study uses anthropological and sociological methods to identify and describe the park neighbors, park residents, ethnic groups, or others with historical and cultural ties and associations with, or special knowledge of park resources, including former residents and their descendants who maintain ties to the area despite having relocated. Through this type of research project, the park learns which people(s) have traditional cultural practices, values, histories and identities associated with park resources, and it develops specific information and understandings about the meanings and importance of park resources to these people and groups.

The NPS Cultural Anthropology Program was developed to document relationships between park resources and park-associated peoples and groups, which are defined in NPS Policies as those 1) who ascribe cultural importance to a National Park or the natural and cultural resources within the park; 2) whose associations precede the establishment of the park and have endured for at least two generations (approximately 40 years); and 3) whose attachments to places and resources are understood through their traditional practices, values, beliefs and identity as a coherent group or people. The NPS provides further definition to aid in the identification of associated peoples: Traditionally associated peoples generally differ as a group from other park visitors in that they typically assign significance to ethnographic resources— places closely linked with their own sense of purpose, existence as a community, and development as ethnically distinctive peoples. These places may be in urban or rural parks, and may support ceremonial activities or represent birthplaces of significant individuals, group origin sites, migration routes, or harvesting or collecting places. While these places have historic attributes that are of great importance to the group, they may not necessarily have a direct association with the reason the park was established, or be appropriate as a topic of general public interest (NPS 2006:5.3 5.3).

Park-associated communities and groups can be identified as coherent social groupings and communities (that is, with shared sociocultural traditions, values, beliefs and identity), and are distinguished from other categories of park users such as visitors, constituents, interest groups and members of the general public due to the nature of the group and the basis of their attachment to the park. Thus, they are differentiated from self-selected groups such as user groups or recreational users like bicyclists and hikers. Park-associated peoples or groups may include park neighbors, kinship units (such as members of extended family groups), Native Americans, ethnic and religious groups that have traditional uses and associations with park places and resources arising from the sociocultural patterns and practices of their communities.

## **Study Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to conduct an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment related to traditional and contemporary ecological, cultural and historic associations with the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The study includes those people and communities who have had and may continue to have traditional use associations with the park and its resources, although the major focus of the study is to identify and describe contemporary associations of ethnographic groups to the park. The research included consultation with persons with relevant knowledge of the area, ethnographic observation and interviewing, a

search of published histories and ethnographic material pertaining to the area in which the park is located, archival research in search of relevant archeological and historical records and documents, and the collection of focused and semi-structured interviews or oral histories.

Major objectives of the research were determined following consultation with the National Historical Park staff and the Regional Cultural Anthropologist for the National Capital Region, then were formalized in the Scope of Work. These objectives include:

1. Document the ethnohistoric context of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

This project will describe the broad history of community formation, growth, and change in the region from the first European settlement to the present time, and specifically those communities lying within or adjacent to Harpers Ferry. The influx of populations and groups at different periods for different reasons will be summarized in terms of settlement locations, differentiation (by industry, ethnicity, or other relevant factors), and highlighting continuities with contemporary populations and communities. The study documents historical connections between local towns and communities, and notes important historical events such as the War of 1812 and the Civil War, development of tourism; transportation, such as the railroads (B&O and W&P), canals (Patowmack and C&O) and the turnpike; local industries (from the Armory to water-powered industry on Virginus Island, local quarries and farming practices, Savery's pulp industries); the establishment of Storer College and the Civil Rights Movement; and the establishment of Harpers Ferry National Monument. While the research for this study will focus on contemporary park connections that have continuity with earlier patterns of association, these discussions will be grounded in the context of the historical, social and demographic patterns from which they emerged. This information will help frame the description and analysis of continuity in patterns of traditional use and association, as distinct from other park uses (or park visitors).

2. Document Contemporary Native American Associations.

This project will research potential tribal associations to resources now managed by the park, or document the lack of contemporary associations by state or federally-recognized tribes. This effort will be informed in part by archeological work completed at Harpers Ferry NHP.

3. Document Traditional Associations and Uses Related to the Park.

The research shall document the cultural and natural resources in the Park that long-term park neighbors and other local users define as having cultural significance and value, or use in culturally distinctive ways. Such uses include recreation, subsistence and religious uses of cultural and natural resources (including open land, farms, and waterways); plants, fish and wildlife; certain places and sites that are viewed as appropriate for certain kinds of cultural practices; and other uses that have been customarily practiced by members of local communities. This study will examine the extent to which these patterns of association continue.

Ethnographic communities highlighted in this report include: residents connected to the Old Masonic Lodge in the Philip Coons building; Storer College alumni, professors, and associated individuals; descendants of Italian-American quarry workers; associations with armory workers; those involved with the tourism industry; NAACP members; and farming families. These groups were selected based on suggestions from park staff and the Regional Cultural Anthropologist, who created a list of communities and groups that

appeared to have significant ties to the park's landscape and resources. The research team narrowed the list after performing preliminary research to determine which groups seemed most promising for study.

Some park resources and areas have been historically associated with certain communities and groups; the research will document the extent to which such "territorial" patterns and a sense of "ownership" of certain places continue in the contemporary period, and explore and analyze the basis of these associations.

This research will also identify and describe any traditional harvesting (farming, fishing and gathering) and uses of animal, plant and other natural resources for subsistence, commercial, sport, or recreational purposes in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park by communities situated within or adjacent to the park. The significance of continued access to the park's resources will be evaluated in relation to the continuity and preservation of community lifeways and the contribution of such resources to local or family socioeconomic systems. The research will be based primarily on ethnographic observation and encounters in communities within the study area combined with oral history interviews.

4. Identify those instances in which documentation or research is lacking in respect to particular associations or communities or groups.

Through ethnographic analysis of traditional associations with park resources, some groups may not ultimately be identified as park-associated groups (e.g. 'visitors,' or those who feel a strong connection to Civil War battlefield sites). The study will identify culturally specific uses of park resources and culturally or historically significant sites, places or objects within the park. It will provide information about the extent to which natural and cultural resources are considered to be heritage resources in the context of the history and cultural traditions and practices of contemporary communities or groups.

The results of the project will be used to provide the salient ethnohistorical and ethnographic context of park resources as baseline ethnographic documentation. Among other applications, the information will help managers identify and emplace historical and traditional (ongoing) uses of natural and cultural resources within the park, serve as the basis for dialog and conversations with park neighbors about the heritage values of the park to local communities and groups, and enhance park resource management decision-making and interpretation. Therefore, such research can play an important role in the compliance process.

## **The Value of Ethnographic Research**

Ethnographic research was developed as a foundational methodology within anthropology, but is now used in many of the social sciences as well as other disciplines. Relying upon a combination of interpretive and descriptive approaches, and qualitative methods such as participant observation and interviewing, ethnographies locate people within their environment and attempt to access the special knowledge that people have about their own particular lived experience. The etic or outsider view is gained through observation and identifies elements of a culture or community that members may not notice or recognize themselves, given their subjective location in their environment. The emic or insider perspective, gained through interviews and other methods that allow group members to describe their own experiences, providing information that only a member of the community would know, and would not be part of the outsider's knowledge or realm of experience. Ethnography is a method of identifying cultural elements that

are particular to communities and also universal across time and space. It takes into account not only the present-day community, but also its past and future, to provide a more comprehensive, holistic image of the community's members.

Traditionally, ethnographies focused on cultures, communities, and environments that were foreign to the researcher. In addition, researchers spent years in the field in order to fully immerse themselves in the culture under study and produce a more comprehensive understanding of it. Today, however, it is widely recognized that ethnographies performed in one's own environment are just as valuable and important. In addition, ethnographies performed for corporate or governmental entities often come with time constraints that limit the amount of fieldwork that can be performed. In these cases, the researcher may not have the luxury of long-term immersion in the field site and must collect as much data as possible in the time allotted.

Ethnographic research has many benefits. First, it can be used to identify the web of environmental features, social relationships, historical events, values, and beliefs that combine to produce a distinct culture or community. However, within this distinctiveness, ethnographies can find similarities across time and space and patterns in human behavior, all of which contribute to a particular shared group identity. Ethnographic research can illuminate the specific values and practices that, in the case of this particular study, can show how people connect to national parks and the resources contained therein. An understanding of how people relate to and interact with the park can help park staff make informed decisions about the management and preservation of its resources.

## **Research Methods**

The development of the research questions and design was through a collaborative process with input from Harpers Ferry NHP leadership/resource managers and framed using park foundation documents. Research was constructed to provide data on ethnographic groups whose values regarding park resources was not understood. The findings from this study will inform the possibility of future studies of non-identified communities.

The research methods and approaches used in this study were determined following consultation with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park staff and the Regional Cultural Anthropologist. The project began with the identification of groups and communities that should be included in the report, some of which had been proposed in the Scope of Work and others that were added followed by a brainstorming session held in October 2014 and attended by park staff, the Regional Cultural Anthropologist, and the researchers. After conducting a preliminary investigation of these potential groups, the research team proposed that the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment be developed in such a way as to identify all relevant human associations with the park and its resources but to focus on three communities or groups that seem particularly promising in respect to their relevance and their relationship to the park (the African American community, Italian American quarry workers, and representatives of the tourism industry), and also address ten additional groups or activities that were somewhat less significant but still worthy of inclusion. This



approach was proposed in the Work Plan, which was approved by park staff and the National Capital Region's Regional Cultural Anthropologist in December 2014.

The research methods, as determined by park representatives and the research team, would include a combination of archival and library resources, informal conversations with experts and specialists, and eight to ten semi-structured interviews with local residents. The research team proposed that the interviews and oral histories be targeted toward the three groups highlighted above, as we saw greater value in directing two or three interviews to a particular associated community or group than in spreading them out in an attempt to cover eight or more different groups. Park staff approved this methodology in December 2014.

The research team made a total of nine site visits between October 2014 and September 2015. Each visit lasted three to five days, and was spent collecting primary and secondary data and conducting interviews. Archival material and relevant literature were obtained from historical societies, museums, libraries, and park archives. Digital archives and repositories were also valuable sources of information and photographs. The sources consulted at these various repositories include family records, letters, newspapers, census data, genealogies, oral histories, scholarly publications, and research reports. In the course of this research we collected an overwhelming amount of data, much of which was included in this report.

In order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the research problem and obtain local knowledge and perspectives on historical and traditional associations, we conducted a series of interviews with those who have resided in or near Harpers Ferry and those who have expert or special knowledge of a particular aspect of our research. Key informants identified by park staff, community members, and the research team participated in informal discussions or in-depth, semi-structured interviews depending on their type and level of expertise.

We held informal discussions or meetings with fifteen local residents and other knowledgeable persons, including business owners, scholars, and park staff at Harpers Ferry. These conversations helped us identify additional records and information as well as the names of potential interview subjects. Furthermore, many of these people were "insiders" in a particular field or industry, and could provide us with important information that might not be easily found via literature review, archival research, or other documentary sources. Such discussions are a normal feature of ethnographic research. They were not recorded and participants will not be identified by name in the report, as they did not undergo an informed consent process.

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with local residents who had spent all or most of their lives in Harpers Ferry and therefore had particularly deep ties to the area and clear associations with the park. These interviews followed a more formal protocol than the informal discussions. Prior to each interview, we explained the goal of the research and obtained written consent from the interviewee. All semi-structured interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. The interviews focused on a limited number of topics that were determined in advance by the interviewer. However, these interviews remained informal and open-ended in that both the interviewer and the interviewee were free to elaborate and explore new themes or topics as a result of what the interviewee said. All the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study were based on a flexible protocol prepared in advance for each interviewee and the special knowledge or experience of that interviewee. While some topics were similar across interviews, the ways in which they were expressed varied from one interview to the next depending on the understood expertise of the

interviewee and their relationship to the park and its resources. The following questions were asked in each interview:

*Can you tell me something about your connections to this area? How long have you been here, if your family has been here awhile, things like that? What about the national historical park? Are there ways you feel connected to the place, or ways you or your family have used the resources of the park in the past, even before there was a national park there?*

*Can you tell me something about what it was like to grow up around here? What kind of things did you and your friends or families do here?*

*Can you think about how other members of your community might have been connected to or used some of the resources within the park or nearby it, people other than your family?*

*What about now? What parts of the park do you or other family members make use of now?*

*What are some of the biggest changes you have noticed since growing up around here?*

*Is there anything else you can think of that might help us understand all of this better?  
Are there other people who know some of these things that we should be talking with?*

These interviews were grounded in local knowledge but connected to global experiences, and provided us with a sense of the heritage of the groups in question.

While documents and reports provide much of the information in this study, the interviews and oral histories we conducted or discovered introduced the personal experiences, emotions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values of those who live(d) in and around Harpers Ferry. Those who provided oral histories were eyewitnesses to or had personal experience with the events in question, and described events that occurred during their lifetime. Nolan Reilly et al. described oral history as such:

Oral history is a method of historical and social scientific inquiry and analysis that includes life histories, storytelling, narratives and qualitative research. The practice of oral history is universal: we all engage in oral history practices in our everyday lives, in telling our stories or listening to others. At every step, oral history is grounded in local knowledge and is connected to global experiences. As a method of exploring the past, oral history builds people's capacity to appreciate the complexities of history, to critically evaluate the role of history in society, and, perhaps most importantly, to participate in the making of history (2008: 4).

On oral history's potential and strength, Reilly et al. argue that:

[oral] history is about evidence and justice. It is about storytelling and building community. And it is about collective memory and the ways in which our past shapes – and is used to shape – our present and our future. Knowledge and emotion combine to make oral history a powerful tool for reaching out across disciplinary, social and geopolitical boundaries. It has the power to build bridges across ways of knowing, from the ivory tower to its surrounding community, and across continents and oceans ...It brings history into, and out of, the community. It helps the less privileged [...] towards dignity and self-confidence. It makes for contact – and hence understanding – between social classes, and between generations. [...] In short it makes for fuller human beings (ibid).

The interviews and oral histories included in this report reflect the important process of generating, collecting, and sharing cultural information. This lends a great deal of value to these sources, though there is a limit to their usefulness, owing to the fallibility in human memory and the occurrence of errors in transmission (Simic 2003).

This speaks to a larger concern for the potential lack of accuracy, reliability, and validity in oral histories. The transcribed oral interviews are the opinions, personal history, knowledge, and perceptions of the interviewees, therefore the information provided by and through some of the interviews does not necessarily accurately reflect historic or current events in which interviewees were not directly involved. Furthermore, as time goes on, people's memories about the facts of a historic event become dimmer.

However, while specific details of an experience might not be retained, people tend to remember the significance and emotional impact of an event (Yow 2005:36-40). As Chambers and Sullivan point out regarding narratives, "Whether they are strictly true or not is much less important than that they are held to be meaningful and that they are used to convey important information about how a people regard themselves" (2013:13). Paul Thompson argues that oral histories cannot be assessed in the same way as one would assess other types of historical evidence— to do so would "[erase] its special value as a subjective, spoken testimony" (2000:118). Still, while the two forms of evidence may have their differences, the similarities are also quite pronounced: "Both types of sources are selective characterizations of events, both are subject to bias, and both can easily perpetuate fictions" (INAC 1996). Thompson contends that written documents are no more accurate than oral evidence as all are flawed, biased, and "represent social perception of facts" (2000:124). All forms of data have strengths and weaknesses; therefore this study relies upon several different kinds of evidence for a more comprehensive understanding of Harpers Ferry's history, environment, and community.

## Overview for the Report

The Ethnographic Overview and Assessment is composed of five chapters that identify and describe all relevant human associations with the park and its resources. With the help of park staff, interviewees, and our own research, we discovered a large number of groups that could be included in this study; however, given the time constraint, we selected the most relevant groups to highlight. Furthermore, some of these groups have a history that is extremely well-documented, so we collected significantly more data than could be included in this report. On the other hand, some groups were determined to be significant within the context of the park's history, but lacked much documentation. These issues will be further addressed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Two provides a broad history of Harpers Ferry's social, political, economic, and demographic changes over time, identifying key events, groups, and individuals of importance to the town. It traces Harpers Ferry's development as an important manufacturing and commercial town after the American Revolution, identifies the town's role in the Civil War, and examines its period of industrial growth and development during Reconstruction, as well as its subsequent decline during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The timeline also includes the rise and fall of Storer College, the town's role in the Civil Rights movement, the creation of the National Monument and later the National Historical Park, and the growth of tourism in the twentieth century. This chapter provides a general overview of Harpers Ferry's history, while the history of specific ethnographic groups will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four.

This chapter also includes sections focusing specifically on industry and transportation, as these topics are crucial to a comprehensive understanding of the development of Harpers Ferry. The town's

economic base was long centered on its various industrial activities, including a federal armory, mills, and quarries. Furthermore, from the ferry-crossing operation of the 1740s to the railroads and canals constructed in the 1830s, the growth of transportation systems is what allowed Harpers Ferry to realize its commercial potential. The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal (C&O), the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad, the Winchester & Potomac (W&P) Railroad, and U.S. Route 340 are a few examples of the means by which people and goods moved throughout West Virginia and beyond, and facilitated the growth of industry and tourism in Harpers Ferry.

While this study primarily focuses Harpers Ferry's post-Contact history, Chapter Two will also address the presence of Native Americans in and around the area that is now Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, including those who predated European settlement. Archeological excavations revealed evidence of Late Archaic/Early Woodland occupations (c. 1200-500 B.C.), and records kept by Europeans document Native American presence in the eighteenth century. However, no contemporary Native American groups or individuals have been linked to the park or the region surrounding it.

In Chapter Three, we will describe in detail three groups or communities that have clear associations with the park and its resources. These groups include: (1) the African American population of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar; (2) Italian quarry workers employed by the Standard Lime and Stone Company; and (3) representatives of the tourism industry. These groups were selected because their ties to the Harpers Ferry area and the cultural and natural resources therein have endured over decades or even centuries. Information about the value and significance they place on the park's sites and resources primarily came from interviews and oral histories. Other groups and communities were identified but not highlighted in this chapter because they lacked a substantial body of evidence to support their associations with Harpers Ferry; either they no longer had a presence in Harpers Ferry or were relatively new to the town and did not have strong ties to the landscape.

In Chapter Four, we will discuss other organizations and communities that have some kind of historical and/or contemporary ties to the park and its surrounding areas. These groups were primarily identified through conversations and input from park staff and further informed by our research. They include: (1) alumni, former faculty, and former staff of Storer College; (2) reenactors and living history participants; (3) Black advocacy organizations and leaders; (4) residents of the Masonic Lodge; (5) recreation professionals; (6) members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans; (7) farm families; (8) armory workers and their descendants; (9) residents of Virginus Island; and (10) those involved in subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering. While these groups had or have a demonstrable connection to the National Historical Park, they do not necessarily have such strong and long-lasting ties to the area and its resources, or they do not form a cohesive community to the degree of the groups featured in Chapter Three.

In the final chapter, we will provide a summary of the report and identify themes that appear throughout the texts and interviews collected for the study. We will also provide recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER TWO: A PLACE IN TIME

Harpers Ferry's history has been shaped in large part by its environment. Located at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers and below the Blue Ridge Mountains, and not far from cities such as Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Harpers Ferry has long been valued for its natural beauty, its strategic location, and its potential for transportation and industrial growth. The environment both shaped the kinds of industries that developed in Harpers Ferry—mills that relied on waterpower, tourism based around the scenery—and, at other times, destroyed those very industries. The earliest recorded flood occurred in 1748 (Barry 1903:16), and since then, local residents have dealt with many more floods of varying degrees of seriousness. In addition to natural disasters, Harpers Ferry's residents have dealt with war, economic crises, and rapidly changing technologies. However, the town's history is not merely one of constant catastrophic events; it has also seen growth and development, prosperity, and stability.

### Native American Presence

Much of Harpers Ferry's historic past is extremely well-documented, and previous studies conducted by the National Historical Park provide a comprehensive picture of the community from the early 1700s to the present. The land's indigenous residents are less well documented and thus there are some gaps in our knowledge of that history.

The Shenandoah Valley was initially inhabited by Native Americans during the Paleoindian period (11,000 – 9,600 B.C.) (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:6). Paleoindians formed bands of territorial semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers who moved among different seasonal camps, often in or near floodplains (*ibid.*). There, they built temporary wooden housing and organized their campsites with different areas for practiced hunting, butchering, fishing, and quarrying (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:7).

During the Early Archaic period (9,600 – 7,600 B.C.), Native Americans adapted to a new climate and environment when the Shenandoah Valley began to warm up. Vegetation was more abundant, which likely prompted population growth for Native American groups living in the Shenandoah and Potomac Valleys, as evidenced by the more abundant number of campsites found from this era (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:25). This period is characterized by a transition from fluted points to points with notched edges; a change in lithic technology that indicates improvements in hafting techniques and the introduction of the spear thrower (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:9). People moved from floodplains to elevated land near a water source, where they hunted deer, elk, small game, and plants (*ibid.*).

During the Middle Archaic period (7,600 – 3,800 B.C.), inhabitants of the Shenandoah Valley continued to practice a hunting and gathering lifestyle, aided by the warmer climate which produced more varieties of plants and trees (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:10). The abundance of edible plants led to the creation of storage pits for surplus foods (*ibid.*). Settlements became larger and more numerous, and began to extend out to areas that were previously considered to be undesirable, such as wetlands (*ibid.*). During the Late

Archaic (3,800 – 1,500 B.C.), populations flourished with distinct cultures arising in southern and western Maryland (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:10). People became increasingly sedentary and formed small communities or settlements, from which they traveled to other areas to engage in regional trade for raw materials such as stone (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:11). This period was characterized by the introduction of the broadspear and domestication of some plants and animals, namely gourds and dogs (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:12).

The Early Woodland period (1,500 – 400 B.C.) saw an increased reliance on fish and shellfish, and the continued gathering of edible plants, nuts, and berries; there were also few changes in the lithics and settlement patterns during this time (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:14). The Middle Woodland period (400 B.C. – A.D. 1000) was characterized by the appearance of new point and ceramic types and the presence of earthworks and mounds in the Mid-Atlantic; several examples of the latter have been identified in Washington County, Maryland, and Berkeley County, West Virginia (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:16). The mounds demonstrate contact with the Adena, a moundbuilding culture from the Ohio Valley. This interaction further indicates an increase in the size and activity of the trade network, a sedentary lifestyle, and a food surplus were present. (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:17). Maize was introduced during the Late Woodland period (A.D. 1000-1600) and had a transformative effect on indigenous communities. Food was cultivated and stored, and the surplus allowed people to be more sedentary and focus on specialized craft production, and it also fostered population growth (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:18). People in the Shenandoah and Potomac Valleys were settling in larger, more complex communities or chiefdoms and cultivating corn, squash, beans, sunflowers, and tobacco outside their villages or along riverine floodplains (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:18). The local population continued to increase due to the presence of a reliable food source and the ability to store it, which took place in pits below circular houses of wooden post construction (*ibid.*). Societies became increasingly complex and people participated in intertribal trade and social interactions as well as customs and practices such as funerals and burials in pits and mounds (*ibid.*). It was also during this period that members of the Algonquian linguistic group migrated to the Shenandoah Valley and constructed fortified villages where they interacted and sometimes fought with neighboring tribes from the Iroquoian linguistic group, who arrived between 1550 and 1575 and soon became the region's dominant ethnic group (NPS 2008:27). By the time of European contact around 1600, the valley no longer housed any kind of permanent settlements and had not done so for nearly one hundred years; only the Tuscarora and Shawnee tribes lived on the land in temporary villages of bark huts (*ibid.*). The region was used as a highway, a hunting ground, and a place for raiding and trade, given that it was rich with natural resources (Poss and Moss 2010:10). Iroquois raiding parties used the valley as a route to attack southern tribes such as the Catawbans and the Cherokees and it was also a conflict zone for the Catawba and Delaware tribes (NPS 2008:27, Theriault 2009:6).

In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Five Nations Iroquois removed all other indigenous groups from the Shenandoah and Potomac Valley and used the region to collect furs and raw materials, and established outposts in the area to trade their goods with Europeans, who were coming to the region in increasing numbers (Hanifan n.d.: 21). Between 1735 and 1737 Lord Fairfax traveled to Virginia to survey the land given to him by King Charles II and establish his rights over it, and throughout the 1730s European settlers flocked to the Shenandoah Valley (*ibid.*). By then, the Native American population had

severely decreased due to intertribal and intercultural wars, and those who remained were decimated or removed by foreign disease, displacement, and loss of territories (Hanifan n.d.: 22). A series of treaties between Native Americans and European settlers pushed the tribes further west, and the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster solidified this trend when the Iroquois sold their claims of lands to the Virginia Colony and moved west of the Allegheny Mountains (Poss and Moss 2010:21, Theriault 2009:21). Following the end of the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Native Americans abandoned the Harpers Ferry and Allegheny region and moved even farther west to avoid contact with settlers (Poss and Moss 2010:21).

Few sightings of Native Americans were reported in the eighteenth century; Louis Michel reported seeing indigenous people in the Bakerton area when he was exploring the Potomac River in 1706 and there were reports of conflicts between Shawnee and settlers in 1707 (Theriault 2009:6). There is also a written account of Harpers Ferry's "Great Pumpkin Flood of 1753," named for an occurrence in which floodwaters displaced pumpkins from Native American gardens carried them downstream (Wentzell 1957:408). In addition, Peter Stephens, one of the first European settlers to live in what is now Harpers Ferry, was said to have lived with a Native American companion called Gutterman Tom (Everhart 1952:5).

While it is clear that Native Americans occupied the Shenandoah Valley region at one time, there is very little material culture from prehistoric inhabitation of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. This is partially due to the fact the park has generally devoted more of its resources to investigating the town's historical remains, rather than its pre-Contact past. In addition, the park has continued to expand its boundaries over time, meaning that an increasingly large area would need to be surveyed (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:30). Furthermore, the constant flooding, erosion, and sedimentation, and a long history of industrial activity along the banks of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and in the town itself, mean that sites have been disturbed or deeply buried (*ibid.*). Still, the National Park Service has detected some evidence of Native American occupation in the vicinity. While very little evidence of Paleoindian occupation remains, five Archaic sites were identified between 2005-2007 along the C&O Canal in Washington County, Maryland, and 25 Woodland sites were documented in that same area (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:26-27). Closer to Harpers Ferry, 76 prehistoric sites were recorded in Jefferson County as of 1992, most of which date from the Early Archaic to the Woodland, and one Archaic site is located less than five miles away in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, indicating that Archaic sites are likely to exist in the park as well (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:26-27). Lithic scatters were found on Bolivar and Cavalier Heights, but they were found in a disturbed context so their interpretive value is limited (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:28). An excavation that took place in Lower Town in 1989-1990 recovered a prehistoric assemblage of 1,585 items dating to the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods (c. 1200 – 500 B.C.) that included ceramic sherds, prehistoric lithics, postholes, and hearth features (YoungRavenhorst 1994:21). Data indicate that the area housed a series of occupations over time and possibly hosted different ethnic groups (27). Excavations in the Lower Armory Grounds from 2005 to 2007 revealed no prehistoric features but 68 prehistoric artifacts were recovered, including ceramics, lithics and fire cracked rock. Diagnostic artifacts range from the Late Archaic to Early Woodland (Hammer 2011:249-254). A second excavation was conducted in 2011-2012 to further investigate the prehistoric footprint in the park; again, no features were found, but 579 artifacts (mostly lithics and ceramics) were discovered in an



undisturbed prehistoric layer. These artifacts, along with pollen and soil analyses, indicate that the National Historical Park saw a human presence dating at least as far back as the Late Archaic (Ebersole 2012:143).

In the greater region, several excavations took place at the Hughes site, a Late Woodland village on the Potomac River in Montgomery County, Maryland. The site was likely occupied for a few decades between 1400 and 1500 A.D. by a group more closely related to the Piedmont groups of Virginia than to local tribes (Jirikowic 1999). The lithic, ceramic, floral, and faunal artifacts recovered from the site suggest that the residents practiced plant cultivation, hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild resources, and collected or made most of what they needed locally rather than engaging in trade. Just east of Bakerton, West Virginia, excavations unearthed thirteen burials that date to around 1170 AD (Theriault 2009:5). Also recovered were beads, a flute, awls, fishhooks, scrapers, gouges, bowls and scoops made from turtle shells, and a hearth feature (Theriault 1989:28). It appears that the site is part of a long-term habitation of the Late Woodland period, where the settlement had separate areas for stone tool working, sewing, cooking, and food processing, and later inhabitants practiced farming (Theriault 2009:5).

At present, there is not a significant Native American presence in the area. According to the 2010 U.S. Federal Census, two residents of Harpers Ferry identified as Native American out of a population of 286, and 132 residents of Jefferson County identified as Native American, or 0.2% of the county's population. We were not able to identify any Native American groups or individuals who have ties to the Park's resources or engage in traditional activities there. As another park study (National Park Service 2008a:37) points out:

Given European contact and European American westward expansion, many of the once specific connections of Native Americans with their traditional lands have been lost. This is the case with Harpers Ferry. In the vicinity of Harpers Ferry there are no federally recognized American Indian tribes. There are no such American tribes with whom to request Native American government to government consultations. There are no known ethnographic resources or traditional cultural properties traditionally associated with contemporary Native American peoples in what is now the national historical park.

## Contact and Colonization

The land on which the park was established was originally part of a land grant given to Thomas, Lord Fairfax by King Charles II of England. Settlers began to arrive in the Shenandoah Valley in the early eighteenth century. The earliest European settlers in Jefferson County were German, reflected in the fact that almost fifty percent of the current population claims German roots. Other early settlers were of Irish, English, Scottish, or Dutch origin.

In 1747, a millwright and builder named Robert Harper was traveling south from Pennsylvania and recognized that the meeting of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers held a great deal of industrial, transportation, and commercial potential (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.1). At the time, there was but one settler in the area, Peter Stephens, who had occupied the land since 1733. Stephens was drawn to the area by the prime location at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and took advantage of the influx of settlers to establish a ferry operation to transport travelers across the Potomac River to Maryland (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:25, Stinson 1970:1). Stephens sold land, ferry equipment, and a log cabin to Harper.

Over the ensuing years, Harper purchased an additional 125 acres of land from Lord Fairfax and constructed a sawmill, a gristmill, and a three-story stone building, and also continued to operate the ferry, aided by the fact that in 1762 the Virginia General Assembly granted him exclusive rights to ferry those crossing the Potomac River by foot or wagon (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.1). Upon his death in 1782, all of Harper's holdings were passed down to his heirs and his land was divided among them. The Virginia Legislature passed an act for Establishing Ferries and for Erecting a Toll Bridge, dictating that the ferry keeper at Harpers Ferry—at this time, the Wager family, heirs to Harper—could charge a fare from each carriage, wagon, driver, head of cattle, sheep, pig, or goat (ibid.). A similar ferry was established to transport people and goods to the Virginia Shore (ibid.). Ferrying continued even after a double wooden highway bridge was constructed across the Potomac River in 1824 (National Park Service 2011:16), though the Wager family collected tolls from foot and wagon traffic on the bridge as well.



**Figure 4. View of the Shenandoah River, 2015. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

## Industrial Era

Growing political unrest in Europe contributed to a sense of apprehension in the United States and a need for protection from potential threat. Consequently, Congress approved funding for the construction of three armories to produce and store weapons. President George Washington proposed Harpers Ferry for one of the sites, as he had visited the town as a young adult and was impressed by its strategic location and economic potential. Harpers Ferry's proximity to the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers provided a means for transport and waterpower, and its remote location would keep it relatively well protected from attack. Congress subsequently authorized the armory at Harpers Ferry, and in 1796 and 1797 purchased the rights to 427 acres of land in Virginia and Maryland from Robert Harper's heirs (O'Donnell et al. 2009:11.2). In 1798, workers arrived to the site and constructed a factory, dam, waterpower canal on the Potomac, workshops, barracks for armory workers, and an arsenal [see Figure 5]. Arms production began in 1802.

Before the construction of the armory, Harpers Ferry was a tiny rural community that offered little more than a convenient river-crossing point for those traveling through the Blue Ridge Mountains, but by the early nineteenth century it had grown to include twenty workshops, two arsenal buildings, and 86 dwellings.



**Figure 5. An 1803 print of Harpers Ferry showing the arsenal (center), a two-story brick structure built in 1799-1800 to store firearms manufactured in the nearby armory. Painting held by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Image courtesy of the Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0021).**

At this point, the U.S. government owned most of the land in Harpers Ferry, but in 1803 the Commonwealth of Virginia granted Daniel McPherson an eleven-acre plot of land which is now known as Virginius Island and has hosted a variety of industries and manufactories. That which was not controlled by the government was held by the Wager family. Descendants of Robert Harper, the Wagers had sold the land that the armory was constructed upon, but retained two extremely valuable tracts that comprised Harpers Ferry's business district. Between 1796 and 1836 the Wagers essentially owned all the private property in Harpers Ferry except for Virginius Island, and this allowed them to influence the commercial development of the town to their advantage (Snell 1973:5). Until 1835 the family refused to sell any of the land from their Six-Acre and Ferry Lot Reservations in the business district, preferring to grant leases to individual lots for a specific number of years. According to the terms of these leases, the Wagers could control the type of building and business that could occupy the space, which in turn limited the number of dry goods stores, drug stores, hotels, etc. that could be built and operated in Harpers Ferry (ibid.). By eliminating competition, business owners could charge high prices and pay off their debt to the Wagers while making a profit for themselves (ibid.). The Wagers formed part of a powerful group of elite families known as the "Junto"; along with the Stubblefield, Beckham, and Stephenson families, they controlled much of the private property and business at Harpers Ferry, and were able to exert tremendous political influence (Lee 2011:35).

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the armory continued to expand and the town shifted from a small agriculture-based community to a busy industrial center with a lively community of largely Irish and German armory workers and mechanics (Porter 2011:21). Production continued to increase, and between 1801 and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the armory produced more than 600,000 muskets, rifles, and pistols, largely thanks to the innovations of John H. Hall, a gun maker who pioneered

mechanized arms production and interchangeable parts (National Park Service 2011:16). Growth was further encouraged by the arrival and expansion of transportation systems including roads, canal, and railroad, which helped connect Harpers Ferry to the regional and national economies and facilitated the circulation of people, goods, and materials. In 1830, the Harpers Ferry, Charles Town & Smithfield Turnpike Company was organized to construct a turnpike that entered the town at Shenandoah Street and ended near Wager's Bridge (Gilbert 1984:39). In that same year, the Frederick and Harpers Ferry Turnpike Company was established and two years later had completed a toll road from Frederick, Maryland to the Maryland side of Wager's Bridge (ibid.). In 1852, the Hillsborough & Harpers Ferry Turnpike Company constructed a toll road that extended fifteen miles south from Harpers Ferry to Loudoun County (ibid.). As a result of these road improvements, Harpers Ferry enjoyed a brief era of stagecoaching between 1829 and 1836; twice a week a stage came through the town from Washington, D.C. and traveled on to Charles Town (Snell 1973:12). In 1834, Harpers Ferry was a stopping point for stagecoaches traveling between Winchester, Virginia and Frederick, Maryland. Passengers stopped in the town to eat and sleep, prompting the establishment of several hotels such as the Globe Inn, Harpers Ferry Hotel, and the National Hotel (Snell 1972:13) [see Figure 6].

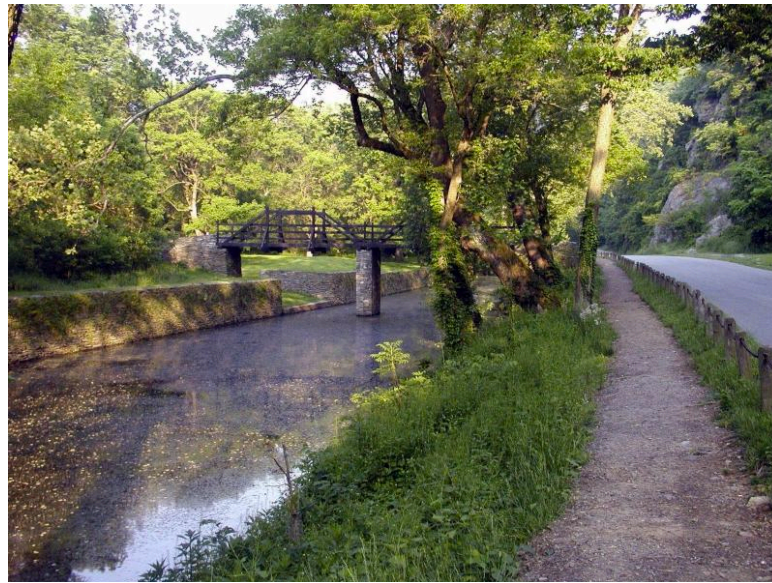


**Figure 6. The Stephenson Hotel, which formerly housed the Harpers Ferry Hotel, located in historic Lower Town, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

To further promote commerce and transportation, a canal system was constructed by the Patowmack Company, which was organized in 1785 to improve the Potomac River and, under the leadership of George Washington, to oversee the deepening of river channels and the construction of bypasses around inaccessible river rapids. Over the next two decades, the company also constructed canals and locks in the Shenandoah to make it navigable for a distance of 160 miles, from Harpers Ferry to Port Republic (Gilbert 1984:38). These improvements facilitated the transportation of goods down the Potomac River and also enabled travel between the Maryland and Virginia sides of the river (Theriault 2009:55).



Narrow, flat bottom barges called gundalows poled by a crew of two to five men transported iron, flour, lumber, furs, firearms, tan-bark, apples, potatoes, corn, tobacco, and brandy on the Shenandoah River (Gilbert 1983). Accidents rarely occurred but travel could only take place in the fall and spring when the water levels were high enough to support the barges (Gilbert 1984:36). In 1824, the Shenandoah Company took over the Patowmack Canal above Harpers Ferry and made improvements to raise the water level in the canal to expand river commerce (Gilbert 1984:38). The Shenandoah Canal, as it was known from then on, was in operation until 1877 when it was converted into a millrace following a major flood [see Figure 7].



**Figure 7. Shenandoah Canal, 2013. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

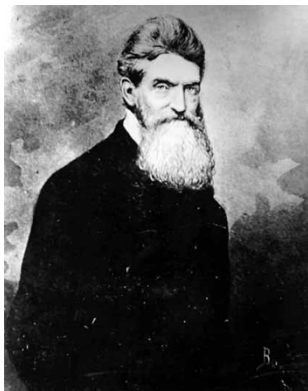
The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Company formed in 1828 and took over the Patowmack Company's property and right-of-way (Gilbert 1984:38). The canal was intended to extend from the tidewater to the Ohio River, but only one of its planned sections was completed (Holland 1965:2-3). By 1833, the canal reached Harpers Ferry, but the canal system was already in decline in favor of the railroad, reducing the company's motivation to continue further. In addition, the canal was beset by financial problems, bad weather, unexpected construction issues, and disease among the workers (Gilbert 1984:4, Holland 1965:3-4). It was also difficult to find local labor because the canal had a reputation for spreading disease, so the canal company recruited Irish, German, and Dutch laborers from abroad. The immigrant laborers had to deal with poor housing conditions and inadequate food, as well as Asiatic Cholera, which reached the canal in 1832 and 1833 (Holland 1965:4).

In 1828, construction began on the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad, relying on the inexpensive labor of Irish immigrants. The track reached Harpers Ferry in 1834. In 1836, the B&O Railroad Company built a railroad and wagon bridge across the Potomac River. Wager's Bridge, just upstream from the newly constructed B&O bridge, had continued to host foot and wagon traffic and collect tolls, but conveyed its toll rights to the B&O Railroad in 1839 (Gilbert 1984:40). In 1836, the Winchester & Potomac (W&P) Railroad completed and opened its track, which extended from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, Virginia. The expansion of transportation services in Harpers Ferry facilitated rapid expansion for business and industry. The Gault

House Saloon, the Wager House Hotel, the Virginia House, and a B&O ticket office were erected between 1837 and 1843 to serve the railroad's customers who stopped in the town to dine (Gilbert 1984:35). The railroad also facilitated industrial growth by enabling the U.S. Armory and industries on Virginus Island to access suppliers on the east coast to purchase tools and machinery. In addition, rail services allowed finished products to be shipped from Harpers Ferry to Frederick and Baltimore on the B&O Railroad or south to the Shenandoah Valley via the W&P Railroad (*ibid.*). By 1850, the C&O Canal was completed from Cumberland, Maryland to Washington, D.C. and finally opened for use. In Harpers Ferry the locks had been constructed to allow canal boats to access the Musket Factory to receive and deliver goods (National Park Service 2011:16). Mule-driven barges also carried coal, corn, wheat, lumber, and flour in weights of ten times the maximum load carried by the flatboats on the Patowmack Canal (Gilbert 1984:38). Harpers Ferry became less isolated and insular, and now had access to a diversity of markets in variety of geographic locations, which in turn accelerated the development and prosperity of the town itself. The advent of the railroad also allowed people to travel faster and more efficiently. In 1853, the B&O Railroad kicked off its first excursion train of "two special trains of cars" from Baltimore, conveying about 500 invited guests to Wheeling, West Virginia. Many esteemed guests attended the event, which was the subject of much fanfare (Virginia Free Press 1853:2).

Harpers Ferry began to outgrow its humble beginnings; workers were living in crowded, unsanitary conditions and the town was growing in a haphazard fashion. Armory Superintendent Major John Symington took it upon himself to modernize and regulate the town's appearance. He developed a rectilinear grid plan for the town, had the streets widened and old buildings demolished, and sold lots for workers' housing (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.3).

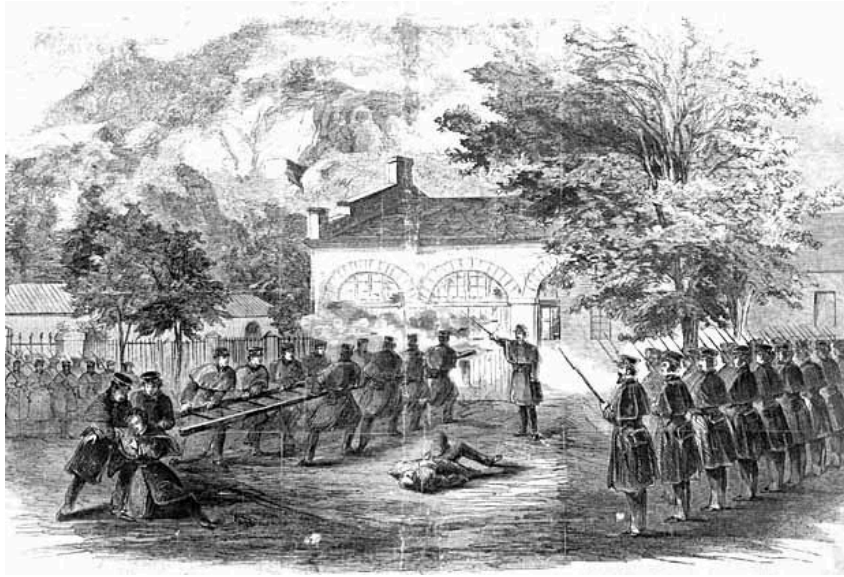
By the 1850s, Harpers Ferry was a bustling industrial town of about 3,000 people. However, its stability would not last long, as the industry that secured its prosperity would also make Harpers Ferry a site of conflict. Over the next two decades the town would be targeted several times due to its prime location and



**Figure 8. Portrait of John Brown, date unknown. Image courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-00826).**

valuable stock of arms. The first of such incidents occurred in 1859, when abolitionist John Brown concocted a plan to liberate slaves by giving them arms and leading them in an uprising [see Figure 8]. He selected Harpers Ferry as the site for this action to take place, as there were 100,000 arms stored in the arsenal at the time (Crosbie and Lee 2009:50), and the town was conveniently located near both the slave states of the South and the free state of Pennsylvania. On October 16, 1859, Brown led his Provisional Army of 21 men in a siege and capture of the armory. From there, Brown's plan quickly unraveled. Within 36 hours the U.S. Marines had captured Brown, and most of his "army of liberation" had been wounded or killed [see Figure 9]. Ironically, the first man to die during the event was Heyward Shepherd, an African American baggage handler for the B&O Railroad who was fatally shot by two of Brown's raiders when they

encountered him on the bridge spanning the Potomac River and he refused to follow their orders to halt or turn back.



**Figure 9. Illustration that appeared in the November 1859 issue of Harper's Weekly, captioned "The Harper's Ferry Insurrection. --The U.S. Marines storming the Engine-House. --Insurgents firing through holes in the wall." Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

Two months later, Brown was found guilty of treason and conspiring to rebel and commit murder, and hanged in nearby Charles Town. Though Brown's raid was short-lived and failed to achieve its goal, it was covered by newspapers across the country and drew a great deal of attention, bringing conversations about race and slavery to the forefront of national political discourse.

## The Civil War and Its Aftermath

Harpers Ferry's unique advantages would once again come into play during the Civil War. Both Confederate and Union forces recognized the benefits of the strategic location and the presence of the armory and arsenal in the town, and engaged in an ongoing struggle for control of Harpers Ferry [see Figure 10]. Between 1861 and 1865, Harpers Ferry would change hands eight times.

Being the center of conflict had a tremendously destructive effect on the town. In April 1861, Union troops destroyed nearly 15,000 arms and much of the U.S. Armory property to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Confederate Army (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.3), and what was left of the armory's manufacturing equipment was removed by Confederate forces and sent to Southern states so they could produce their own arms. Confederate troops also burned the B&O Railroad bridge on their way out of town; a witness noted that "the whole structure seemed to ignite at once and was soon consumed, the incombustible parts, iron rails and metal roofing, falling into the water, the quantity of half-burned timber and there forming a dam the whole



**Figure 10. The 22<sup>nd</sup> New York Infantry on Bolivar Heights, ca. 1860s. Photo courtesy of the National Archives.**

way over that one might cross upon” (Stinson 1970:27). In the following years, the bridge would be damaged three more times by Confederate and Union troops, which restricted transportation and commerce [see Figure 11].

In September 1862, General Robert E. Lee sent 28,000 troops with General Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson to engage the 14,000 Union troops that were stationed at Harpers Ferry. The battle lasted for three days and ended with a Confederate victory and the largest surrender of Union troops during the Civil War. Following this battle, Southern troops burned the railroad bridges across the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers to clip important transportation routes (O’Donnell et al. 2009:II.4). In addition, wandering bands of Union troops reportedly caused deliberate damage to the town and farmland of Harpers Ferry while passing through it (Theriault 2009:105). By the end of the Civil War in 1865, the town was desolate and largely abandoned, having been decimated by cannon fire and looting, and stripped of vegetation (O’Donnell et al. 2009:II.4). John Trowbridge, a traveler from the North, noted that “all about the town are rubbish, and filth, and stench” (Towbridge 1866:66) and a correspondent from the *London Times* observed that the area around Harpers Ferry and Charles Town

appears to have been waste country from time immemorial.... This moor was a few months ago divided into farms, cornfields, and orchards, now wiped clean out of existence. There are no fences to show even where the fields were once marked off, and the trees stand out gaunt and spectral in the wide waste, their branches shot away or torn down for fuel by the succession of armies which passed up and down the sorely harassed valley.

Of nearby Shepherdstown and Winchester, he noted

the once fertile fields are lying completely barren, for the owners have lost all their means, their Negroes having fled, and their houses and money having been carried off. There is not a fence left along the whole distance, and graves are scattered everywhere by the roadside. Far and wide the fields, often yellow with corn, look like a black and barren common (Theriault 2009:105).





**Figure 11. View of Harpers Ferry from the Maryland side of the Potomac showing the remains of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bridge in the foreground and buildings of the federal musket factory in the background on the right, 1861. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0048).**

Harpers Ferry lost one-third of its population in the course of the Civil War, with only a few residents remaining to protect and rebuild their homes. The government decided that it was not worth the cost to rebuild the armory, so it was closed and the property was auctioned. Though the sale prices were greatly inflated, townspeople were eager to purchase the lots after hearing reports that entrepreneur F. C. Adams had a plan to redevelop the waterpower industry (Moyer et al. 2004:40). They soon learned that Adams's development plans were part of a scheme to purchase the Federal Armory lands and sue the B&O Railroad regarding its right-of-way through that property in hopes of receiving a large settlement (ibid.). Still, Adams's activities gave people hope for future prosperity, and the transition of public lands to private property encouraged residents to build homes and stores, thereby stimulating development. During the late 1860s and early 1870s, the railroad bridges across the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers were reconstructed, which reconnected Harpers Ferry to the larger world of commerce. In spite of the huge cost of repairing the bridges and tracks after the Civil War, the B&O was committed to staying in Harpers Ferry and even expanding its tracks; it gained control of the W&P Railroad which then became known as the Valley Branch Railroad of the B&O (National Park Service 2005:100, Porter 2011:6). Aided by subsidies and land for development from the federal government for infrastructural work, the railroad was able to fund an expansion to reach new depots in Wheeling, West Virginia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as well as to Virginus Island in Harpers Ferry in order to serve the mills and their employees (Porter 2011:6). The B&O Railroad Company also rebuilt and reinforced the Bollman Bridge that crossed the Potomac River in order to ensure that it would not suffer the amount of destruction it had during the Civil War. In the 1870s, the railroad became involved in the tourism industry by offering excursions to tourists, adding sleeping and parlor cars, and constructing hotels along its routes (ibid.). This, in turn, aided Harpers Ferry's own economic development, and the town constructed

businesses and hotels to serve the new tourist market.

The C&O Canal resumed operations in 1866 and continued to be increasingly profitable throughout the early 1870s. At its zenith, the canal made use of over 400 boats and 2,000 men, many of who were residents of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar and had been displaced from their previous jobs by the Civil War (Porter 2011:8).

These factors helped stimulate the town's recovery, a fact that was reflected in the town's population, which grew to exceed its pre-war numbers by 1870 (United States Census 1860 & 1870). Still, while commerce began to develop once again, the town did not flourish as it had in the pre-war era.

It was also during this post-war period that Harpers Ferry's black population increased. In part due to its distinction as the site where John Brown's raid had occurred, Harpers Ferry was a place of refuge for runaway slaves (also known as "contraband") both during and after the Civil War. Following the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, it became clear that the town's population of newly-freed slaves would need support and social services. The federal government established the Freedmen's Bureau to organize resources and services, and one of its biggest projects in Harpers Ferry was to establish a school for freed black children. Reverend Dr. Nathan Cook Brackett was sent to establish a primary school, and with the assistance of New England Freewill Baptist missionaries and philanthropist John Storer, additional properties were acquired on Camp Hill to create the Storer Normal School, which provided teacher training. For 25 years, Storer College was the only institution in West Virginia to provide African Americans with a secondary and post-secondary education [see Figure 12]. It drew African Americans from all over the country and later hosted civil rights advocates at the 1906 conference of the Niagara Movement, a precursor to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.



**Figure 12. Storer students and instructors in front of Lincoln Hall, ca. 1910. Courtesy of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Archives (HF-5593).**

In spite of these gains, economic growth and progress were slow in Harpers Ferry. Along with the Adams scandal, residents suffered setbacks due to a national financial crisis and depression known as the Panic of 1873, frequent destructive floods, and court battles regarding the B&O Railroad's right of way and access to waterpower (Porter 2011:16). Businesses were hesitant to establish themselves in such an unstable environment, and it was common for those who attempted it to experience a difficult season after a few years of operation and declare bankruptcy and leave town (Porter 2011:99). In such a risky and fluctuating market, only the few businesses that catered to the local population managed to survive (*ibid.*). Residents continued to maintain hope that the government would sell the former armory property and new industries would establish themselves in the post-war period, but this did not come to fruition until the late 1880s, and even then, industry never reached its pre-war heights. The McGraw family opened a bottling plant and a brewery on the north bank of the Shenandoah River in 1888 and 1895, respectively, but after the elder McGraw died, his son and daughter went bankrupt and were reported to have fled the town out of shame (Moyer et al. 2004:43). Both the brewery and bottling works were sold, with only the latter continuing to operate into the twentieth century.

The year 1888 also marked the creation of the Standard Lime & Stone Company, which would go on in 1901 to establish a quarry and limestone mining industry at Millville, just five miles from Harpers Ferry. In that same year, Thomas Savery purchased the former armory grounds and established the Shenandoah Pulp Company on Virginius Island and then the Harpers Ferry Paper Company in 1890 along the Potomac Shoreline (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:96). Though pulp mills were never major employers and did not pay their workers a great deal, the establishment of the pulp mill gave the struggling community hope that prosperity would once again return to Harpers Ferry (98).

Tourism was a growing industry in the post-war period, thanks mostly to the B&O Railroad and C&O Canal, which brought travelers to the town and stimulated economic development. Small businesses, hotels, and boardinghouses began to appear in the Lower Town to cater to tourists; by the 1880s and 1890s Harpers Ferry boasted restaurants, saloons, general stores, clothiers, two hotels, and a host of businesses for local residents such as a barber shop, a shoemaker, a drug store, a post office, and a plumbing and tin shop (Porter 2011:44). The B&O Railroad brought in additional tourists beginning in 1880 when it constructed Island Park on Byrne's Island in the Potomac River. The twenty-acre amusement park was a major attraction that drew residents and tourists alike.

## **Growth and Change at the Turn of the Century**

Harpers Ferry suffered another setback in 1889 due to a flood that damaged or destroyed many of the buildings that had been constructed or renovated during Reconstruction (Moyer et al. 2004:42) [see Figure 13], but overall the town was finally enjoying a sort of revival, with the growth of commerce, population, and infrastructure. This trend continued into the early twentieth century, when Harpers Ferry enjoyed some degree of stability, perhaps due to the fact that no major floods or other disasters occurred during the first two



**Figure 13. Shenandoah Street following a flood, 1889. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0082).**

decades of the twentieth century (Porter 2011:99). The population continued to grow, with an increase from 2,596 to 3,269 residents between 1900 and 1920 (Porter 2011:85). Many of the new residents were Italian immigrants who came to work in the quarries for Standard Lime; 68% of foreign-born residents were Italian-born in 1920 (*ibid.*). In general, most of the population was involved in small-scale manufacturing and industry, while tourism, service, and craft industries declined, indicating that Harpers Ferry was primarily a “residential market” that was “stabilizing, homogenizing...and becoming more of a working class community than a resort town” (Theriault 2009:49). Still, Camp Hill, the site of Storer’s campus, remained a popular destination for wealthy tourists to spend the summer. The rise of the automobile meant that railroads became less popular modes of leisure travel, so while Harpers Ferry could no longer count on railroad excursions to bring in new tourists, it focused on serving Camp Hill’s summer residents who returned annually. Competition from auto-tourism cut into the railroad’s profits, and to compensate the B&O cancelled two routes and reduced the number of commuter trains, a decision that greatly upset and inconvenienced residents of Harpers Ferry (Porter 2011:74). However, the railroad continued to be important to them. Isabel Flanagan, a long-time resident, recalled that around the time of World War I, the railroad employed many residents of Harpers Ferry as engineers, conductors, firemen, mail car, dining car waiters, porters, and workers in the B&O freight office and warehouse (Flanagan n.d.). Daily trains continued to run, as well as weekend excursion trains to Washington, D.C. where people traveled to visit museums, theaters, and the zoo. According to Flanagan, “all railroad employees and their family had free passes, or so it seemed, to the ends of the line” (*ibid.*). Bolivar resident Raymond Biller recalled how trains frequently came through town:

They used to have a train that ran right up this valley, it ran every day, stopped at Millville, Halltown, stopped at all the little towns along the way to Strasburg, Virginia, and then it came back in the evening. There were about three cars. The Main Line had passenger trains at all hours of the day, going east and west about

every hour. There used to be bus service through here, too, from Winchester and Frederick. They'd come through in the morning and then again in the evening (Hale).

Harpers Ferry began to enjoy the economic boom that had been anticipated for so many years, but its prosperity did not last long. In 1925 the Harpers Ferry Paper Company mill burned down, though it was never a major employer to begin with (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:9). As the town moved into the 1920s, tourism



**Figure 14. Touring Harpers Ferry by automobile, 1920.**  
Unknown photographer, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

declined. Island Park fell into disrepair and no longer drew visitors, and in 1924 a flood washed away the Island Park Bridge (Theriault 2009:49). The number of visitors to Harpers Ferry also declined due to the rising popularity of the automobile. No longer a resort town, Harpers Ferry now attracted day-trippers who were merely passing through, stopping on their way to a more distant location. Auto tourists preferred to spend their time driving on the open highway rather than aiming for destinations like Harpers Ferry (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.5). In addition, Harpers Ferry was slow to adapt to this new method of

transportation, and gained a reputation for being unaccommodating of auto tourists. The town's roads were in terrible condition and not suitable for automobiles, and the streets were often congested with local residents' livestock, which blocked traffic and caused accidents (Porter 2011:73). Cars became increasingly common in the 1920s as even Harpers Ferry residents began purchasing them and more tourists were traveling by car [see Figure 14]. Harpers Ferry still largely catered to residents, having businesses such as a bank, barber shops, feed and hardware stores, department stores, a dry goods store, three lunch rooms, a bakery, a confectionary, butcher shops, blacksmiths, a shoe repair shop, a drug store, two doctors, a pulp mill, bottling works, and a volunteer fire department (Theriault 2009:49). Residents remained hopeful that there would be another industrial boom, but the combination of a flood in 1924, frequent railroad strikes, fires, and a delayed adaptation to new technologies such as automobiles made it unlikely that entrepreneurs would look to Harpers Ferry to establish their businesses.

One area where Harpers Ferry did experience significant growth was in illegal liquor trafficking. Prohibition in the 1920s led to the closing of saloons, and a new market opened for moonshining and bootlegging (Porter 2009:101). Due to Harpers Ferry's remote location and the seclusion provided by the mountains nearby, the town became an ideal location for illicit activities. A raid of the hills exposed nearly seventy-five stills, giving Harpers Ferry the reputation of a "premier moonshine region of the country" and the whole region as a "Moonshine Empire" (ibid.).

As the 1920s wore on, Harpers Ferry became more of a small, residential community, though there were some attempts at reviving industry. In 1920, a branch plant of Interwoven Mills was established in a former Presbyterian Church in Harpers Ferry. The mill, which produced men's hosiery, first began operations

in 1890-91 and eventually became the largest employer in Martinsburg for several decades (Jenrette 1996).

When we interviewed local resident Jay Mauzy, he recalled his experience working for one of the branches of the mill:

Jay Mauzy: And they were based in Martinsburg and the man that was in charge, he hired me and he hired a friend of mine by the name of Berkeley Winters, lived over on the back street there, and taught us to take care of the stocking machine, far as working on 'em, repairing 'em. He had women that took the socks out of the machines as they were made... but we were their fixers, that was our title. Well, he ran it there several years and the socks that were made were men's socks and ankle top, you could make different length socks, whatever they wanted, and they were taken to Martinsburg and finished up there and the machines that made these socks, they were in a string. They came out of the machine and went down in a drum at the bottom. Had a couple of women here in town were, they were called the knitters and they had to take care of, I think, about six machines apiece. We had 24 machines in there, and if anything... they'd inspect each sock as it came out of there. If they found one that had a bad needle in it, they'd tie it on a handle on the machine and take it off the line they ran off of a belt power driveline. And we got to go and find that needle and pull it out of there, put another one in and watch it making socks.

Megan Bailey: How old were you when you were working there?

JM: I was just out of high school then.

MB: And how did you like it there? What did you think about the work?

JM: Well, it was money [*laughs*]. But I was interested in that type of work. But after--I worked there, and then they decided to transfer us up to Martinsburg and I worked there and the one fellow worked in there with me. He went on the main knitting line up in Martinsburg for Interwoven and I went in the Experimental department and there when the sock designers would come up with a pattern that they want to test to see if it was feasible to put it on the machine, if they could make this particular pattern and, well, I worked there, I guess, five or six months. It was back then when things slowed down, the industry closed and they said, 'well, we don't need you anymore' [*laughs*].

MB: Yeah.

JM: 'Come get your toolbox.'

MB: Oh, wow.

JM: That was the end of my career with Interwoven.

There was much excitement around the opening of a branch plant of Interwoven Mills in Harpers Ferry, as it would employ two hundred women and girls and, as the *Mountain Echo* reported in January 1920, it was expected that the mill's presence "will liven things up considerably and will tend to shake off the lethargy under which the place has supinely reposed since the Civil War transpired." The same newspaper reported in April 1920 that "the girl employees find the work easy and pleasant, and are paid ten dollars a week while learning to operate the machines." However, the mill was susceptible to an unstable market and had to have periodic closures and layoffs before closing in 1926 and laying off sixty to seventy-five women (Porter 2011:109).



## Economic Decline

Residents suffered through another flood in 1924, which damaged the pulp mills and bottling works, cut off clean water for two weeks, harmed businesses and industries, and forced the permanent closure of the C&O Canal. By the time the Depression arrived in the 1930s, Harpers Ferry was already struggling with unemployment, unprofitable industries, floods, and business failures. The Shenandoah Pulp Company went into debt and eventually closed in 1935 (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:98).



**Figure 15. Flooded businesses in Harpers Ferry's Lower Town, 1936. Unknown photographer, courtesy of the National Weather Service.**

A catastrophic flood in 1936 caused serious water and structural damage to many of the buildings in Lower Town, destroyed the Harpers Ferry Bottling Works, and damaged or destroyed the bridges that crossed the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers (O'Donnell et al. 2009:II.5). Residents of Harpers Ferry were cut off from Route 340 and the commerce that it brought [see Figure 15].

It would take an additional two years before the states of Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia would work with the B&O Railroad and the Department of Transportation and resolve to plank the Valley Line Railroad Bridge so vehicles could use it (ibid.). In the meantime, cars were transported across the rivers via ferry, which was unreliable and time-consuming. Overall this had the effect of making travel to Harpers Ferry seem inconvenient and difficult, and people no longer came directly into Harpers Ferry; rather, they went to nearby Charles Town or Brunswick, Maryland to do their shopping and conduct business (Day 1950).

Harpers Ferry was slowly becoming a ghost town; by 1940, the population had fallen to just 665 people (Gilbert et al. 1993:3-118). Another devastating flood occurred in 1942, destroying the bottling works and many of the ruins and historic buildings that had been damaged in the previous floods. By the time a new flood-resistant bridge was constructed over the Shenandoah River in 1947, many of the town's businesses had already folded or relocated, and travelers were routed away from Harpers Ferry because the new bridge was located a mile south of town. Route 340 bypassed the town altogether and continued straight to Charles Town, directed traffic around and away from Lower Town. Consequently, Harpers Ferry lost one of its primary sources of revenue. The relocation of Route 340 and the destructive nature of these frequent floods prompted many of the Harpers Ferry's small businesses to close and move to Bolivar, Charles Town, and beyond in the 1940s (Porter 2011:145).

During our interview, local resident Jay Mauzy recalled how Charles Town provided many Harpers Ferry residents' goods and services during that time:

That was the main place. We didn't have a car but my aunt and uncle were practically going up there every Saturday to shop. They'd take us along if we wanted to go, had to go for shopping, if what you wanted wasn't available here in town store-wise. This lady used to run this store on the corner up on the street while I lived on Gilbert. She was there in the corner building. Maiden lady. I guess she, she worked...downtown for years and then she just saved her money and she went into the grocery business there. She had canned goods and things like that. She did a good business there. If you didn't have anything, you had to wait and go to Charles Town or bum a ride to Charles Town *[laughs]*. That's what the younger fellows in school... of course the quarry came right through town. You'd get out there and hitchhike to Charles Town, go to the movies or something like that, same way you're coming home. People who had cars, they'd see 'em standing on the curb at ten or eleven o'clock at night, hitchhiking back to Harpers Ferry. They'd pick 'em up.

Many local residents followed the businesses to Charles Town, relocating in order to receive the goods and services that were no longer being provided in Harpers Ferry. During World War II, Harpers Ferry's male population decreased as many enlisted in the military. Community development devolved as the town became increasingly depopulated.

Following World War II, Harpers Ferry began to stabilize again. A Masonic Hall, Lions Club, movie theater, and drive-in theater were established in the late 1940s and early 1950s, giving residents community centers and opportunities for community events such as parades, parties, and lectures (Porter 2011:145).

## Development of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Life changed for Harpers Ferry's residents once again when advocates led by Dr. Henry T. McDonald, who had served as Storer College's president, campaigned to have the town of Harpers Ferry formally commemorated as a historic site. This was accomplished in 1944 when Congressional legislation created the Harpers Ferry National Monument. The State of West Virginia purchased property from local residents in order to donate it to the US Government for the monument. The property and buildings were generally in poor condition and badly in need of repair, renovation, or even demolition. James Walter Coleman, Superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park, performed a survey of the living conditions and residents in the houses to be acquired by Harpers Ferry, and described what he saw as a "residential slum." Of the twenty-one households surveyed, most were occupied by tenants who had moved in with or without the permission of the former owner, most of the houses had no plumbing or running water, and none had central heating. Another report observed that, "pigeons by day and bats by night flutter about the broken windows of the upper stories of the brick buildings. Floods and the refuse of human habitation have left much debris" (Kennedy 1954:A14). In addition, most of the structures had been severely damaged by flooding and had to be demolished (O'Donnell 2009:II.6).

By 1954, the government owned most of the land it had originally purchased for the armory in the eighteenth century, and the National Park Service was beginning to restore the town to its appearance circa 1859-1865, the historic period encompassing John Brown's raid and the Civil War (*ibid.*) [see Figure 16]. Structures that did not conform to this setting were removed. Storer College closed in 1955 when the Supreme Court case *Brown v. The Board of Education* ended federal and state funding for segregated





**Figure 16. Shenandoah Street as it appeared in 1955, shortly before the Park Service began restoration activities. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Historic Photo Collection (HF-0311).**

schools, and in 1963 the former Storer College campus was added to what was now Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, along with Camp Hill and additional lands.

In 1963, Harpers Ferry National Monument was officially designated a National Historical Park, and the National Park Service set to work restoring it to its 1859 appearance. This dismayed some local residents, as it required the removal of many buildings that had been constructed after the Civil War, sometimes even an entire block of buildings (Moyer et al. 2004:141). However, the intervention of the National Park Service ultimately preserved the town and prevented its historic fabric from further decay [see Figure 17].

Local reactions to the establishment of the park were mixed. Bolivar resident Raymond Biller praised the park, remarking that Harpers Ferry “was a rat hole before the Park Service took over” (Hale). By contrast, Wolf Von Eckardt wrote in a 1975 issue of *Cityscape* that the National Park Service’s treatment of Harpers Ferry is:

somewhat of a flop. The service is diligently presenting the shabby ruins of a small town—properly labeled with historic inscriptions and beautified with misplaced shrubbery—to an audience of about a million visitors a year. But...one gets the impression that the Park Service has little understanding of the drama of the place.

He argued that Harpers Ferry should be more like Colonial Williamsburg “and every bit much as fun.” It “shouldn’t be restored but revived.” He also declared that “What we have is a slightly tawdry tourist trap with souvenir shops and the ubiquitous scented candle boutiques scattered among some restored architectural treasures and a Civil War museum and a wax museum. And yet the place is exhilarating. The Hilltop Hotel has one of the most fabulous views in the country” (von Eckardt 1975).

Our interview with Jay Mauzy touched on some of the apprehension around the establishment of the park:

Megan Bailey: And so when the park was established, did you visit the park or spend time there?

Jay Mauzy: Well, after it was established, yes, but I didn't know at the time earlier just what it was going to consist of or what they were going to do. There were a lot of rumors going around, people siding with one or the other.

MB: What did people think? What were some of the rumors, or what were people saying?

JM: Well, they thought that was gonna infringe on their--doing their business around the countryside, wouldn't be able to do this, couldn't do that. Mostly rumors, didn't work out the way they thought it would.



**Figure 17. View of High Street in historic Lower Town, 2014. Photo by Erve. Chambers**

A survey of letters to the park superintendent from concerned citizens reveals fears about traffic, parking lots, and park boundaries infringing on people's private property and negatively affecting their businesses. One local resident argued that the historic buildings should be restored and repurposed to serve the community rather than the park, saying, "It makes no sense to spend \$8.7 million for the scenic protection of a junkyard" (Von Eckhardt 1975). A resident we spoke to observed that the local community resented the park's presence because it surrounds the town and restricts growth. The park's perceived lack of sympathy for and engagement with the local community during the early formation of the park was a common theme in our interviews with longtime residents. Several people we spoke to described an incident when townspeople donated historic items to the park, and according to one resident, the park put the items in storage and forgot about them. They are perhaps referring to an incident in the early 1960s when the Harpers Ferry Women Club was working with the park to restore the Harper House. The Club solicited donations of heirlooms to furnish the house but the park elected not to use the furnishings, having determined that they did not match the period they were restoring the house to, and had "questionable value" and "no exhibit value and little historic importance" (Moyer et al. 2004:190). It seems that this was not a deliberate or callous slight but the result of differing ideas about what constituted historical significance or usefulness for a particular interpretive framework (Moyer et al. 2004:117).

Parking-related issues were commonly brought up in letters of complaint and in interviews; nearly all

of our interviewees addressed this issue in some way. Most of these concerns were a response to the National Park Service's removal of parking lots from Lower Town and construction of a larger lot and visitor center on top of nearby Cavalier Heights. A shuttle was also added to transport visitors to Lower Town. While this protected the historic and natural landscape from tourist traffic, it inconvenienced local residents and deterred them from coming to the park, because if they drove they would have to pay to park their cars on Cavalier Heights, which was both ironic and irritating to them since they were essentially paying to visit their own "backyard." Local resident Mike Jenkins explained to us his interpretation of the situation that many local residents faced:

Well, I'll tell ya, personally I don't visit the park very much and my main objection is I hate paying entrance fees [laughs]. It's kinda ironic that the park surrounds me for the most part, 'cause it's on three sides of me, but it's kind of hard paying to visit where you live, so I rarely come into the Lower Town historic area of the park which, of course, is again--call it the highlight area of the park. It's kind of unfortunate 'cause again if I have people visit or whatever, we'll generally go somewhere else. I mean, I'm very familiar again with the park. It's just that the entire access to the park, paying to get in the park, sometimes just other congestion--let's call it--things.

Yeah, changes I've seen---I mean, my biggest changes is--and again because I've been here so long is--we used to have a parking lot downtown--what we call the front parking lot and the back parking lot and we would occasionally even fish on the back parking lot. Again, I'm talking way, way early years. So, you know, we would just come down, park in there, fish in the river, sometimes even, you know, til late in the night. And then they built the Visitors Center on Cavalier Heights, closed off the rear parking lot, let that kind of adjust itself for about five years, then they eventually got to where they closed the front parking lot--again, devised it to be the bus depot area, and then eventually when they acquired the railroad station, that took away one of the last places to locally park.

So again, those changes--and again, that might be what keeps the local people from just interfacing with the park, as well--just again, to them, yeah, they're not gonna go into Cavalier Heights and come down on a bus to some place that they've been familiar with all their life. They're not likely gonna park up top and try to walk in because again I wouldn't claim that walking is their primary interest. So, I guess the parking is one of the bigger things. I understand why it was done. I don't have any objections to the principles behind it but--visitation definitely has changed, you know, over that time frame.

Harpers Ferry residents Rhonda Smith and Sharon Spriggs were a bit more blunt in our interview:

Sharon Spriggs: I mean, it's different now because we were allowed to enjoy the park. I didn't--there's no way in the world I live right up here and I'm gonna drive over there and pay five dollars to go down there--no, it's not gonna happen.

Rhonda Smith: It doesn't happen now, no.

SS: It ain't gonna happen.

RS: No.

SS: No.

[Both laugh]

SS: No! I'm not gonna pay to see my own water!

Business owners in Lower Town also protested the changes, as they feared that the lack of parking spots would discourage people from visiting their shops and restaurants. During an interview with us, longtime

resident Jane Tabb described how the changes around parking might have harmed local businesses:

Jane Tabb: It affected all the little businesses. I mean... You know, if I want to go down there and not walk a mile to go to a local business, I've basically got to go and pay an entry fee and be bussed in and you know it does hurt them, it does hurt them. Well, and there's same issue in Shepherdstown and you know, I know the college wants to build a parking deck but a lot of the locals don't want that so it's damned if you do and damned if you don't [laughs].

Megan Bailey: Yeah [laughs].

JT: I know that hurt, and like I say, I used to go down when there was one little jewelry shop I loved, but I don't do that anymore, you know, go buy gifts and stuff.

Although some residents of Harpers Ferry chafed at the perceived restrictions brought on by the establishment of the park, others have appreciated the park for the resources and recreational activities it provides. Tom Shelton grew up around the park and described in our interview how he took advantage of its proximity:

Tom Shelton: But the park service, I kinda adapted to it 'cause I always went down there, I always was down around the park, hiking the trails, walking up Jefferson Rock, I got to hang out with the rangers. I didn't do no mountain climbing, I was scared of heights, I fell off a roof when I was small. But, I couldn't swim, but I let them talk me into getting in the boat a couple times going down the river, and --

Erve Chambers: With the rangers.

TS: With the rangers, yeah.

Our interviewees also indicated that the park was a popular place to bring family members or visitors. For example, Jane Tabb told us:

Well, we go to Murphy Farm quite a bit and take our grandchildren and walk with 'em... and that's got a beautiful view over the river, so... that's a place sometimes my husband and I will bring another couple and we'll just have a little picnic there.

Local resident Locke Wysong told us that he has used the park for family gatherings too:

Locke Wysong: One time back in the early 90s, the Wysong family had a national Wysong reunion here and we hosted it in Harpers Ferry. My particular family hosted it in Harpers Ferry. I think it was '92 and we had--I think it was over a hundred, 150 people came in all over.

Megan Bailey: Oh, wow.

LW: And they toured. Part of the thing was to do a bus tour on Saturday. So we toured Harpers Ferry and went over to Antietam, toured there and around other historical spots around the county. So it was... you know, pretty good.

## **Present Day**

Local residents expressed to us an appreciation for the National Park Service's preservation activities in Harpers Ferry. The park is located within the fastest growing region in West Virginia; consequently, residential and commercial development has threatened the park and the town of Harpers Ferry for more than two decades (National Parks Conservation Association 2009:13). The development of nearby sections of State Route 9 and U.S. Route 340 has brought several fast-food chain restaurants and big-box stores such as

Wal-Mart. Several older residents lamented these changes, saying that they have less access to necessary services. According to Dewitt Jacobs who was interviewed in 2013 by Elaine Eff:

Everything's different now. All the stores are gone. You've got to go a whole mile to get a loaf of bread and something else, right? You used to have four or five grocery stores right down on the main street. There's not a grocery store down there, can't even buy nothing.

Our interview with Locke Wysong also touched on the lack of services for locals:

Locke Wysong: To me, it's kinda regressed, it's geared more towards tourism, people and in my earlier days it was, the town was there for the needs of the people that lived in the county that came in on Friday night or Saturday and did all their shopping or banking and all that...whatever they had to do, but you know I don't wanna play it down too much.

Megan Bailey: Yeah [*laughs*].

LW: Just like I told a friend of mine that I can remember on Main Street in Charles Town used to be ten or twelve little grocery stores where you could buy mostly whatever you needed. Nowadays you can't go downtown and buy a loaf of bread or a quart of milk. You have to go out of town to do that all.

MB: Yeah.

LW: To me, that's not for the local people, most everything is done for outsiders.

MB: Yeah, I did notice that along like Route 340, or Route 9 I think it might be, yeah, there are like eight different grocery stores out there, but not so much in town.

LW: Used to be, people lived in town, they could walk downtown to get their groceries, whatever they needed but nowadays you gotta count on somebody to drive you or go do it for you so in a way that's, to me, that's the downside of it.

Since its inception, the park has been expanding its boundaries to better protect the cultural and natural resources of the area. The National Park Service acquired property in the 1970s and 1980s to include land across the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and in the 1980s and 1990s prioritized land acquisition that supported the protection of battlefields and historic viewsheds. In recent years, park management has become increasingly concerned about neighboring construction development that could impact the park's boundary habitats and scenic viewsheds (e.g., expanding roads, tall buildings, cell phone towers) (Wong 2010:22). Most recently, efforts to rezone and develop a 410-acre parcel surrounded by the park was opposed by park staff, conservation groups, and local stakeholders, and was eventually halted by Jefferson County officials. However, the park remains at risk of encroachment, which threatens the historic landscape and mars the viewshed. Tom Shelton described to us the many changes to Harpers Ferry's landscape and the positive presence of the park:

But it's like anyplace now, these housing developments, you know, we got housing developments going on out here. And a lot of people were mad about the housing developments and whatever that came in. It didn't bother me because I understood the side of the Park Service keeping the ground, historical ground, you know.

In addition to the physical changes to Harpers Ferry and its environs, residents also observed a change in the people who live there. The developments fueled by tourism and commerce attracted newcomers to the town. In addition, urbanization and development radiating from Baltimore, MD, Washington, D.C., Leesburg, VA, and Dulles, VA, pushed residents further out to Harpers Ferry, which is an

attractive residential option within a reasonable commuting distance of these locations (Addy et al. 2007, Wong 2010:25).

During our interview with Rhonda Smith and Sharon Spriggs [see Figure 18], the women discussed how this change affected the community:

Rhonda Smith: And you knew everybody in town and that kinda saddens me now because I really don't know a lot of people.

Sharon Spriggs: I don't know anybody anymore.

RS: You've got a lot of people that moved in and they're not... as friendly. I mean, they used to be friendly. You could go to anybody's door, if you were thirsty and you were out playing. You could go to their door. I don't know anybody now.

Megan Bailey: Yeah.

RS: I used to know everybody on the street. If you went trick-or-treating, you knew everybody.

SS: Christmas, we'd go caroling. We knew everybody.

Several of our interviewees noted that within the past ten years there has been a significant increase in



**Figure 18. Sharon Spriggs and Rhonda Smith, 2015. Photo by Megan Bailey.**

transplants from Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., and even Philadelphia and New York City. One resident observed that people accustomed to cities are attracted to living in a picturesque town but eventually find Harpers Ferry to be too “country” or rural, and often end up moving back to a more urban area. Rhonda Smith and Sharon Spriggs thought that newer residents tend to be less friendly, which they attribute to their “city attitude”:

Sharon Spriggs: The town has just changed, like I said. You don't know anybody anymore and people don't wanna know you, actually, unless they can get something from you.

Rhonda Smith: And now there's all these big homes back there but the people, like my brother, I'll go by and see him and we'll stay on that side and we'll be talking and nobody speaks.

SS: Nobody speaks.

RS: They'll just ride by, and they don't speak.

Megan Bailey: OK.

RS: That's hard for me, 'cause I'm a speaker, I, you know, they just ride by. I say to him, 'don't they ever speak?' He says 'They always turn their head! They never speak.' But you *live* right there in the neighborhood.

SS: Yep.

RS: You know, you live right there, so...

SS: That's it. You move to the country, then get the country attitude. Don't bring that city attitude with you. Don't bring it. 'Cause... that's not us.

With the influx of new transplants, some interviewees felt that Harpers Ferry is losing the tightly knit community they once knew. As Sharon Spriggs put it:

The people that move in are what change the town. Because they bring that attitude of, “I don't know my neighbors. I don't wanna know my neighbors. I don't care about my neighbors.” And that has taken away from that community feeling that we've always had.

The “community feeling” has also deteriorated somewhat due to residents moving away from Harpers Ferry. Several of our interviewees had children or family members who had relocated to more urban areas in Maryland, Virginia, or Washington, D.C. to pursue job opportunities. While the town may be significant to a family's history and shared memory, it is limited in the types of occupational and cultural offerings available. In spite of these changes, however, Harpers Ferry's longtime residents remain firmly rooted in this particular place. They display strong ties to the town through history, family, and experience, ties that keep them tethered to this place throughout the waxing and waning of Harpers Ferry's industries, prosperity, and population.

## CHAPTER THREE: SOME TRADITIONAL ASSOCIATIONS LINKING THE PAST WITH ITS PRESENT

Given Harpers Ferry's tumultuous history, which is marked by an almost constant cycle of destruction and reconstruction, it is remarkable that one can identify a sense of continuity or community over time. In spite of the disruption of natural disasters and the booming and busting of businesses and industries, some groups have managed to maintain strong ties to their past. After surveying the various groups, organizations, and communities in Harpers Ferry, we have identified three in particular that have clear associations with the park and its resources that have persisted over time. They include: (1) the African American population of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar; (2) Italian quarry workers; and (3) representatives of the tourism industry.

While the African American population's ties to slavery and Storer College have been well documented and well researched, this study will expand the focus to include the daily life of Harpers Ferry's African American community in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Topics to be explored include education, employment, family, recreation, and experiences with race-based discrimination. The African American population has connected with the park for a variety of reasons, including its ties to John Brown and Storer College, its educational resources, and its natural resources.

Italians comprised thirty percent of West Virginia's foreign-born population by 1910, having been recruited to serve the labor needs of the state's rapidly developing industrial economy in the early twentieth century. Italian quarry workers are associated with the Standard Lime and Stone Company, which was established just outside of Harpers Ferry by the Baker family in 1888; the accompanying quarry was in operation until the 1970s. Employees usually lived in Millville, a company town built for quarry workers and their families. Descriptions of Millville paint it as a tight-knit community with a sizeable Italian population that maintained ties to their ancestral home through language, letters, songs, and books. Several of these families remain in the Harpers Ferry area and maintain a connection to Millville.

The tourism industry has been an important feature of Harpers Ferry's commerce since the nineteenth century. Today, it is the number one industry in West Virginia, and one-third of Jefferson County's residents work in the tourism and hospitality industry. Harpers Ferry is particularly suited for drawing in visitors, given its historical significance, natural beauty, and the availability of recreational activities. Interviewees observed that there was a high level of turnover in the Lower Town's commercial district, perhaps because it's difficult to sustain a year-round business when the tourist season lasts nine months at most. A recurring theme in interviews was tension between business owners, the park, and local residents.

While these groups have been categorized separately, there is overlap among their histories and activities and so it is difficult to completely separate them. For example, African Americans have participated in the tourist industry as business owners. In addition, a small community like Harpers Ferry is built on the



interdependence of its residents. Consequently, it is almost impossible to discuss one group without referencing one or more of the others. The following sections will examine each group's history and development in detail, noting these intra-group interactions when relevant.

## **The African American Presence in Harpers Ferry**

The African American community in the Eastern Panhandle is one of the oldest in the state of West Virginia, and the African American presence in Harpers Ferry dates back to the eighteenth century. By the early 1900s, the Eastern Panhandle was second only to the Kanawha Valley, the site of the state capital, Charleston, in terms of the proportion of African American residents. In Jefferson County, the larger African American populations are concentrated in Charles Town and Shepherdstown. According to the 2010 Census, 4.2% of Harpers Ferry's population and 6.6 % of Jefferson County's population is African American. This is a significant decrease compared to the early twentieth century; in 1900 African Americans comprised 24.7% of the population (Nunn 1986:21).

While African Americans have a long and continuous presence in Harpers Ferry and the surrounding area, their historically disadvantaged status means that fewer and less detailed records about their lives and experiences exist. Restrictions on education for enslaved workers and limited education for free African Americans meant that many in these groups could not write about themselves. These circumstances unfortunately often limit us to reviewing that which other people wrote and recorded about African Americans, and the prejudice on the part of the documentarian – primarily white men – results in a particular bias. For example, enslaved workers are often recorded in the same manner as cattle or other property, making it difficult to discern what their daily life and personal experiences were like. In addition, most of the known history about African Americans in Jefferson County is related to their labor: their ability to procure work, their occupation, and the industries where they were concentrated. While one's work is a significant part of one's life, it does not tell the whole story, and it defines a person in terms of their productiveness and labor rather than as a complex human being. However, as time went on and African Americans gained access to resources, financial stability, and education, they were better able to record and share their own experiences. In addition, as researchers we have access to more information about Harpers Ferry's African American population in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries thanks to a number of oral histories and interviews collected from this group in recent years. This study will incorporate a variety of sources to produce a comprehensive overview of the history of African Americans in Harpers Ferry, though unfortunately we will still be limited by the significant gaps in the historical record.

Another challenge when discussing "the African American community" is that it is an imperfect way of categorizing a group of people and their experiences. African Americans have certainly had a particular history that is inextricably linked to the structural inequality and systemic discrimination they have faced since slavery. This system of oppression has affected every facet of their lives, including housing, jobs, and leisure activities. At the same time, it is inaccurate to discuss the African American experience as something wholly separate and different from that of other groups. African Americans lived among white people and

people of other ethnicities in Harpers Ferry; they had shared experiences, they were interdependent, and their lives were entwined through business, employment, or familial relationships. So it is not always easy, straightforward, or accurate to single out a particular experience and designate it as belonging to African Americans alone. In addition, African Americans in Harpers Ferry do not necessarily constitute a homogenous, cohesive community. Some members of this population arrived to the town as slaves, others as free people; some came to receive an education at Storer, some came to perform manual labor on farms, quarries, mills, and other industries; some occupied a higher social status due to business ownership or post-secondary education, while others had less status, wealth, and access to resources.

In the following section we will trace the history of African Americans in Harpers Ferry, beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing to the present day, and attempt to show the diversity of experiences among this group as much as possible given the limitations of the historical record.

## Slavery

Until West Virginia became a separate state in 1863, it was part of the slaveholding state of Virginia. However, slavery was not a significant part of the economy in present-day West Virginia because large-scale plantations were less common in this region. In the late eighteenth century, John Semple, a speculator and owner of one of the first quarries in Jefferson County, owned fourteen of the twenty adult male slaves in the county and used them for tasks related to iron manufacturing. It is likely that the other six slaves worked as domestic help (Theriault 2009:87). Slaves typically remained in the slaveholder's family, as masters viewed them as property to be passed down to their children after their death. In some cases, slave owners left property to slaves in their will; John Carney, an early resident of Jefferson County, left one hundred acres of land to his mulatto son Moses and granted his freedom, though Moses was not able to claim his land due to his illegitimacy or his race (Theriault 2009:40).

Although the historical record lacks a great deal of information about where slaves were put to work, it does seem that they were involved in various industries around Harpers Ferry and Jefferson County. For example, iron furnaces like Semple's Keep Triste, built in 1763 on the banks of the Potomac River in present-day Harpers Ferry, would likely have employed eight to ten workers. In 1769, Keep Triste included "thirteen negro men employed at the furnace ... also a negro boy called Tom, one other negro boy called Gayley, one mulatto man called Sam, four negro women... [and] one negro girl called Susie..." (Theriault 2009:41). They served the various parts of the operation, including a gristmill, blacksmith shop, and forge.

African American labor may have been used in the federal armory and arsenal as well, though opinions are mixed on this subject. According to former National Park Service historian Charles Snell, slave owners would have been hesitant to lease their slaves to participate in industrial labor because they considered it to be too dangerous; their enslaved workers could be exposed to illness and injury which would make them less capable of working for their masters (Lee 2011:10). Merritt Roe Smith (1977:44) claimed that "Slaves... played a very marginal role in building and maintaining the armory; they played virtually no role at all in its manufacturing operations." However, a study performed by Howard University argued that, "it hasn't

been demonstrated that there was a limited supply of slave labor in the county in 1799 as he argues, nor that an unwritten code segregated black from white labor at Harpers Ferry” (Nunn 1986:23). Documentary evidence from the early nineteenth century suggests that two African Americans, “Negro Dick” and “Negro Peter,” made supply deliveries to the armory from Cumberland Iron Works near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; it is possible that they were slaves rented out by local families (Lee 2011:10). This suggests that enslaved African Americans were at least tangentially related to armory operations.

Enslaved workers were also engaged in industrial activities on Virginus Island. In 1830, the black population comprised 21% of the total population (Johnson and Barker 1992:16). Of the nineteen African Americans on the island at that time, eighteen were slaves and one was a free black woman, though only four of the slaves were adult men, so it is certain that not all black residents were involved in the island’s industries. It is likely that there were additional slaves on the island that were not listed in the census; personal property tax records for Jefferson County in 1820-1840 list several residents who were taxed for slaves though they did not appear as slaveholders on the census (Johnson and Barker 1992:17).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Jefferson County had twice as many slaves as any other county in present-day West Virginia, but it still had significantly less than in present-day Virginia (Nunn 1986:16-17). Given its location between the plantations of the south and the mountainous western counties and its development as an industrial center, slavery was not a straightforward or easy fit for the town (Nunn 1986:17). While slaves were used on plantations in Jefferson County, their use was limited by the geography of the area, which precluded the development of large-scale plantations (ibid.). In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, many slaveholders came with their enslaved workers from eastern counties in present-day Virginia and settled in the Eastern Panhandle where they established plantations. Though some farmers owned enough slaves to hire an overseer, large plantations never became standard in Jefferson County the way they had in the Tidewater region (Nunn 1986:20). The railroad and canal had not yet arrived, making transportation difficult and limiting the amount of business that was economically feasible. After the 1820s, slaves and free black workers were chiefly involved in domestic service, agricultural production for the local industrial population, and support of the business and commercial sector that developed in support of the armory and arsenal (Nunn 1986:17).

Slaves comprised just under one-third of the population in 1800 (Nunn 1986:20). The number of slaves in Jefferson County continued to rise until Emancipation in 1863. In 1840, the Jefferson County census lists 4,157 slaves, and in 1850 the county had 4,341 slaves. By 1860, slaves accounted for 27% of the population in Jefferson County (ibid.). The black population, both free and enslaved, was 31% of the total population (ibid.). In Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, the 1850 and 1860 censuses report most slave-owners having one or two slaves, with the biggest slaveholders having eight to eleven (United States Census Bureau).

Although slavery was not practiced to the same extent as in other Southern states, it remained an institutionalized practice in Jefferson County, and was regarded as a necessary evil. Newspaper accounts indicated that “slaves were brought and sold frequently and that public opinion viewed slavery as an inherited curse that had to be maintained in order to keep blacks subordinated” (Nunn 1986:21). Slave trading took place about seven miles west of Harpers Ferry in Charles Town, where slaves were reportedly selling “for good prices” (ibid.). An ad in an 1857 issue of the *Virginia Free Press* demonstrates some of the rates at which

slaves were sold:

A sale of Free Negroes took place lately in front of the Court House in Charlestown. One woman, very old, sold for \$3— another old woman sold for \$30— another woman aged 33 years, sold for \$536.00— another woman 40 or 45 years; sold for \$231.00. These Negroes were sold by order of the Court for remaining in the State contrary to law.

On Monday last, Negroes belonging to the estate of John W. Moore, were sold at prices ranging from \$300 to upwards of \$700, according to age and sex.

Also a lot belonging to the estate of Joe. M. McFarland, sold at good prices, considering the money pressure. One man sold for \$1050.00.

Newspapers also frequently reported the escape of slaves. Due to the proximity of the free state of Pennsylvania to Jefferson County, it was somewhat easier for runaway slaves to reach freedom and it was more difficult for slaveholders to capture and return their slaves. Several advertisements in mid-nineteenth century newspapers referenced Pennsylvania as a possible destination for runaway slaves, as in this 1833 issue of the *Virginia Free Press*:

STOP THE RUNAWAY!

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, yesterday morning the twentieth inst., a negro man named EMANUEL

a stout and well made fellow, about 6 feet high, round, full and likely face, and about 35 years of age. Had on when he absconded [?]pantaloon, coarse Osnaburg shirt, and strong double-soled nailed shoes— no hat or coat when he started, but will no doubt speedily procure these articles. It is believed he will endeavor to reach Pennsylvania; and as he has frequently been employed as a boatman from the Shenandoah river to Georgetown, he will probably aim for that State by way of Harpers Ferry. A reward of \$50 will be given, if apprehended out of the State of Virginia, and \$25 for his apprehension in this State, to be secured in either case so that I get him again.

MARY CHAMBERLAIN.

Kabletown, Jefferson co. Va

February 21, 1833.

As a consequence of the frequency with which enslaved workers attempted to escape, the Virginia Slave Insurance Company was established in Charles Town to insure against losses by runaways (Nunn 1986:21).

Though slavery was less pervasive in the Harpers Ferry area compared to other parts of the South, slaves were clearly valuable to their masters. That significance even extended to a sentimental attachment at times. An 1832 issue of the *Virginia Free Press* ran the following obituary for a seemingly beloved slave:

SOLOMON DEAD

Our faithful old Ethiopian is dead, after a service of 12 year. Humble though he was in station, he yet discharged his duty with scrupulous fidelity—and we shall miss him much. He was not, like the author of the Proverbs, a man of wisdom, but he was 'true and trusty,' and that is more than can be said of a large portion of the human race.

Poor old Solomon! We trust he has gone where the good of his race go. The Free Press has recorded many a death with less of sorrow than its printers now feel—and many have been praised who deserve it less than did our faithful old servant. Peace to his ashes!"

However, whatever their emotional attachment, it was clearly not significant enough for slaveowners to regard their enslaved workers as human beings worthy of freedom and autonomy.

## Free Black Population

Free African Americans have been present in Jefferson County at least as long as their enslaved counterparts, if not longer. In 1732, the Johnson family became the first free black family to settle in Jefferson County (WV State Archives 2015). The free black population continued to increase through the early nineteenth century, a trend that caused the white non-slaveholding residents of Jefferson County to regard free African Americans as a source of economic competition and a threat to their prosperity. In 1819, the American Colonization Society established a branch in Charles Town with the intention of removing free blacks from Jefferson County and sending them to Africa (Nunn 1986:21). In addition, policies across Virginia restricted life for freed African Americans to the extent that their status was little different from that of slaves; for example, they could be re-enslaved if they remained in the state for more than a year after their emancipation (*ibid.*). Still, even with these limitations and discriminatory policies, the free black population continued to increase rapidly throughout the nineteenth century. By 1840, the free and enslaved black populations were about equal in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar (Nunn 1986:17). An early visitor to Harpers Ferry remarked that, “There are more Black people here than I expected to see; the streets are full of them, and there are Blacks in every trade” (Magazine of the JCHS 1961:19). Some free black residents owned property and became prosperous, as in the case of Heyward Shepherd, the baggage master killed in John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, or Mamout Yarrow and his son Aquilla. The elder Yarrow was an educated Muslim African American—an anomaly at the time—who was given his freedom in exchange for making bricks for his master Brooke Beall’s new house in Georgetown. He purchased his 7-year-old son Aquilla’s freedom around 1795. As an adult, Aquilla married Mary “Polly” Yarrow and the couple moved to Pleasant Valley in Washington County, Maryland, where they owned an acre of land and a house (Johnston 2006). Aquilla reportedly died in Harpers Ferry in 1832 and Polly remained in Pleasant Valley for the next fifty years and served as the town’s midwife. Today, there is a Yarrowsburg Road located across the Potomac River and four miles from Harpers Ferry in Washington County, MD; anecdotal evidence suggests that it was named after Polly (Johnston 2012).

Free African Americans were also employed at the armory; documentary evidence indicates that an individual named John Gust held contracts to provide services as a mason and quarryman (Lee 2011:11). Even those who did not work directly for the armory tended to be connected to it in some way, as the presence of that industry provided an economic base that brought free African Americans to Harpers Ferry to work as laborers and harvesters in the case of men, or as cooks, laundresses, and housekeepers, in the case of women (*ibid.*).

By 1850, almost 3,000 free black residents lived in present-day West Virginia. They increasingly gained the necessary skills and resources to participate more fully in society; 84% of this population was literate by the mid-nineteenth century (Nunn 1986:22). Some of the white population of Jefferson County regarded the rising status of free African Americans as a threat to their own status and livelihood, and circulated petitions requesting the ejection of free blacks (*ibid.*). These efforts were largely unsuccessful, perhaps due to strong resistance from black residents. In addition, many of the local industries depended on cheap black labor for their operations, and were invested in maintaining this inexpensive workforce.

Furthermore, some residents feared that enslaved workers would follow ejected free African Americans into free states (ibid.).

## Contrabands

During and after the Civil War, Harpers Ferry attracted African Americans seeking freedom due to the town's strategic location between northern and southern states and at the confluence of the two rivers. In addition, the town had access to several transportation routes via water, rail, or canal, from which runaway and freed slaves could travel in any direction (O'Donnell et al. 2009:V.4). The government allowed these escaped slaves "to be considered as contraband property of war. Technically they were not free, but rather confiscated property. For all intents and purposes though, as far as they were concerned they were no longer slaves" (Sutton 2001). Annie Marmion, a resident of the town, observed that "...contrabands, as the runaway slaves were called, poured into Harpers Ferry and its population [was] soon greater than ever before" (Marmion 1959:9). Alfred R. Waud, a sketch artist for *Harper's Weekly*, also looked upon the contrabands with sympathy, saying:

There is something very touching in seeing these poor people coming into camp—giving up all the little ties that cluster about home, such as it is in slavery, and trustfully throwing themselves on the mercy of the Yankees, in the hope of getting permission to own themselves and keep their children from the auction-block (Crosbie and Lee 2009:72).

The Yankees referenced were Union troops who had established camps at Harpers Ferry around 1862 [see Figure 19]. An additional tent camp was established for these "contraband" refugees and runaway slaves inside the main gate and entrance wall of the Musket Factory (ibid.). Refugees were also housed in buildings around Harpers Ferry, as local resident Louise Brackett recalled in a 1917 letter to Storer College president Henry T. McDonald:

In the description of Camp Hill fifty years ago should be mentioned the fact that in 1865 it was literally swarming with colored people and in 1867 there were still several families in the basement of the Lockwood and all the rooms of the Morrell House and of the Superintendent's House were occupied by them. There was a large country of which Harpers Ferry was the nearest point for refugees and it was full of them though it had been pretty well cleared at the time of Miles' surrender.

The Union camps provided jobs for the contrabands; men worked as "teamsters", constructing defenses and driving supply trains, and women cooked and washed laundry (O'Donnell et al. 2009:V.4, Crosbie and Lee 2009:72).



**Figure 19. Contraband camp in Harpers Ferry. Photo by John P. Soule, 1865. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

## Reconstruction

In the mid to late 1860s, the number of African Americans in Harpers Ferry was reported to be approximately 700, double the pre-Civil War population (O'Donnell et al. 2009:V.4). Seeing a need to provide services to this population in the former Confederate and border states, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in 1865 (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:62). The agency oversaw the relocation, housing, feeding, clothing, and education of poor and homeless freed African Americans (ibid.). The Freewill Baptists made education of freed slaves a priority, and in 1864 a school for refugee slaves was established in Lockwood House, the former residence of the armory paymaster (O'Donnell et al. 2009:V.4). In 1867 the West Virginia State Legislature established a system of free public schools for black children who lived in sub-districts with at least thirty eligible six to 21-year-olds (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:70). The number of eligible children was reduced to fifteen in 1877 so that even those in rural areas could receive an education. However, Jefferson County and the town of Harpers Ferry refused to comply with the state law and provide this education, leaving a gap in services that was filled by Northern teachers and missionaries (ibid.).

The Freewill Baptist school established on Camp Hill was the precursor to Storer College. The next year, Nathan C. Brackett of Phillips, Maine, came to Jefferson County with four teachers and opened schools for black children in Charles Town, Shepherdstown, and Martinsburg (Porter 2011:26) [see Figure 20]. Brackett worked with the Freewill Baptists to open a large Freedman's School at Lockwood House (O'Donnell et al 2009:V.4). The circumstances were not ideal; the building was cramped and in poor condition following the Civil War (Porter 2011:26). By 1867, the Baptist missionaries were raising funds to purchase several armory buildings on Camp Hill with the intention of expanding the school and providing a post-secondary education. Major donations from businessman, former abolitionist John Storer, and General

Oliver Otis Howard of the Freedmen's Bureau provided the financial support to purchase additional properties (O'Donnell et al. 2009:VI.2). Classes at Storer College began on October 2, 1867 with nineteen students in attendance at the Lockwood House (ibid.). The school continued to expand with the acquisition of three other armory buildings donated by the government and financial support from the Freedmen's Bureau in the form of an \$18,000 donation, and a primary school was opened as part of the complex (Porter 2011:27). Classes continued to be held in the Lockwood House, while the other buildings served as residences for students and faculty. By 1870, Storer was a fully operational normal school of 169, training students to become teachers (ibid.). Two years later, several more subjects were added to the curriculum, which included spelling, composition, geography, math, grammar, history, recitation, composition, philosophy, chemistry, Latin, Greek, German, French, geometry, botany, astronomy, Shakespeare, and vocal and instrumental music as electives. At this time the school boasted a student body of 223, and had produced its first graduating class of eight students (ibid.).

The presence of Storer College attracted African Americans to Harpers Ferry to take advantage of its educational and job opportunities. Many white residents resented the presence of the school and the growing African American population, believing that the Freedmen's Bureau and the Freewill Baptists were providing valuable resources to African Americans and unfairly excluding the white population. According to the reasoning of these white residents, everyone in the region had suffered through the Civil War and deserved



**Figure 20. The Brackett House, named for Nathan Brackett, was built in 1858 and in 1869 it was conveyed to Storer College, where it provided students and teachers with housing for 80 years. 1995. Photo by Jack E. Boucher. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

assistance during the recovery period. The Freedmen's Bureau and the Freewill Baptists' establishment of institutions and services for African Americans were interpreted as an imposition on their town and a punishment to southern whites (ibid.). The racial tension made for a dangerous time for Storer College students and faculty, who were bullied by local residents. Students had to be escorted into town by hired militiamen and at one point some carried arms (O'Donnell et al. 2009:VI.2). The State of West Virginia was also antagonistic, and only reluctantly passed the law to charter Storer.

In spite of these challenges, Storer continued to expand. Male and female dormitories were added to accommodate the swelling student body. By the late 1870s, Storer College had won the approval or at least the acceptance of white West Virginians. Harassment decreased and newspapers even praised the school, which by then had a reputation for providing a solid education and producing quality teachers who went on to teach in other freedmen's schools. While the college began to enjoy external success as its status rose, it still dealt with internal problems, most notably its continued difficulty in raising adequate funds to keep the school operating.

Following the Civil War, Harpers Ferry's black and white residents were both affected by a lack of work, housing, food, and clothing. J.H. McKenzie, a Freedmen's Bureau agent, noted in 1866 that:

In Jefferson County there are many helpless destitute persons both Freedmen and Refugees. The refugees are principally women and children some of whom are perhaps able to work, but their [sic] is no work here for



them, nor is their likely to be any... The destitute freed people to whom rations are issued are old and helpless ones and women who have large families and no husbands (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:67).

The 1866 Civil Rights Act affirmed that all citizens were equal and equally protected under the law. Though its passage provided African Americans with more rights, protections, and access to resources, it also increased racial tensions because white individuals regarded the law as allowing African Americans to compete with them for resources that were already scarce. Poor whites in particular viewed themselves as having the most to lose in this situation, since they would have to compete with African Americans for jobs and resources when they were already underprivileged due to their socioeconomic location.

While the African American residents of Harpers Ferry remained at a disadvantage compared to their white counterparts, they were beginning to gain some economic and social stability. The presence of Storer College, the normal school, and the primary school helped increase African American residents' access to education, and Harpers Ferry's black population began to integrate into the community via positions as merchants, business owners, and laborers (Porter 2011:65). African Americans also enjoyed leisure activities, albeit segregated ones. The B&O Railroad organized excursions for black residents consisting of day trips to Baltimore and Washington, D.C., which were offered at a reduced rate (Porter 2011:29). African Americans living in Harpers Ferry also organized a baseball team, the Black Snakes, and played other African American teams in the region (ibid.).

## Occupations

Though African Americans were no longer bound to a particular occupation by slavery, they remained in similar occupations to the antebellum period due to discriminatory practices that limited the types of jobs available to them. Sharon Spriggs and Tom Shelton, two long-time residents of Harpers Ferry, both recalled in our interviews that many of their family members worked at one of the Bakers' stone quarries or for Halltown Paper Mill. As Sharon Spriggs told us, "My grandfather worked at the quarry. That was the biggest place for people to work in. And Halltown Paperboard. That's where most of the men worked." Tom Shelton's male family members also worked for the paper mill:

Mrs. Shelton: And his, all his male—like his father, grandfather, and uncle—they all worked at the Halltown Paper Mill, that's where they were.

Erve Chambers: They worked at a paper mill.

Mrs. Shelton: And I'm guessing back in those days, opportunities were limited for black people. We saw a picture in the *Spirit* of a bunch of workers from the paper mill back in the 1800s and they were all black. But it didn't have their names! It was the *Spirit* though so maybe they didn't know who they were, but we didn't know who they were either.

EC: Where's the paper mill?

Tom Shelton: That's in Halltown, where we wanted to take you.

Mrs. Shelton: You go, you take that light right across from Homeland Security and it's, you curl back in there and you'll see it. And that's where, you know, when it snowed, his dad would walk to work and just stay there til it quit snowing, cause you had 7 kids to feed, you know.

TS: Well, he also, if he got tired, he could go up to his mom and dad that lived in Halltown, they had a house, my grandfather and grandmother had a house in Halltown, so he could walk about 200 yards and he was back home. So if he wanted to get some sleep besides staying at the paper mill, he would just do that. So sometimes we wouldn't see him for a week, cause we got snow back then, we don't get snow like that now, thank God.

According to the Census, the most common occupations for black men in 1860-1920 were farm laborer, day laborer, and worker in the limekiln or stone quarry, most likely as kiln tenders. Black women were most frequently listed as a housekeeper, domestic servant, or laundress. However, African Americans held other positions such as teacher, preacher, seamstress, railroad worker, waiter or chambermaid in a hotel or boardinghouse, and cook in a restaurant, hotel, or private family. As time went on and African Americans gained more autonomy, stability, and economic security, the number of black farmers and entrepreneurs in Harpers Ferry increased and African Americans participated more fully in the political process. In 1900, there were 49 African American farmers in Jefferson County, with approximately 63% of them owning their own farms, 10% part owners, and 24% tenants (Nunn 1986:18). Census data for 1860-1920 show that African Americans who owned businesses were all listed in 1900-1920, with most occurring in the latter year. The census lists one owner of a tailor shop, two owners of a drayman business, one farm owner, three barbershop owners, and three hotel proprietors. In fact, between 1880 and 1900, African Americans operated four of the five hotels in Harpers Ferry (Nunn 1986:24). The Lovett family, who reportedly moved to Harpers Ferry so their children could attend the Freewill Baptist school associated with Storer College, operated two of the hotels: a summer boarding business at Lockwood House that began in 1875, and the Hilltop House on Ridge Street (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:91). The Lockwood House boarding business proved to be a boon to Storer College and Harpers Ferry, as it was a source of revenue for the town and provided students with employment opportunities (92). Initially it was difficult to bring white guests to Lockwood House because they were wary of patronizing a business owned and operated by African Americans, but Mary Brackett Robertson, daughter of Storer College founder Nathan Brackett, explained how her family's whiteness and social connections helped improve the boardinghouse's reputation:

My father knew that Washington was full of people of small means who needed inexpensive vacations for their families but the question was how to make them think it respectable to come to boarding houses kept by colored people. The Lockwood House was the first house opened for summer boarders in Harpers Ferry and the first guests were the large family of a Congressman from Iowa whose wife was a cousin of my father (Robertson 1957:1224).

The presence of a high-profile white family signaled to other white people that the boardinghouse was a safe and socially acceptable place to stay. This incident suggests that though black residents of Harpers Ferry were gaining some degree of status, they were still regularly fighting against discrimination and prejudice from the white residents of Harpers Ferry and beyond.

## Education

Around the turn of the twentieth century educational opportunities became more available to young black residents of the Harpers Ferry area. The Bolivar Graded Black School, initially located on Ridge Street in Bolivar, was a two-room school built sometime between 1887 and 1888 for black students in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar (Jefferson County Public Schools 1976). By 1926, enrollment outgrew the structure, so the basement of the Zion Baptist Church—also on Ridge Street—was rented for ten dollars per month to provide additional classroom space (ibid.). That year, Jefferson County School Board purchased property on Putnam Street in Harpers Ferry in order to replace the Bolivar School. Built in 1929, Grand View was a four-room school that served black students in grades one through eight (ibid.). Sharon Spriggs attended Grand View and recalled her experience there:

Kids were so close that we walked to school. If one kid showed up, they got taught. If five kids showed up, they got taught. And I was taught in a school where there were two grades to each room so you *had* to learn something and you had to behave because the teacher was first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth. So it was a four-room schoolhouse and we had our little cafeteria. I used to work in the cafeteria. I liked that.

Where the School Board failed to establish institutions of learning for black students, members of the African American community assumed responsibility for establishing schools. Achilles Dixon and his wife Ellen owned a house in Charles Town and allowed teacher Annie Dudley to use one room for her classroom. Liberty Street School, as it was called, was used between 1867 and 1874 when Jefferson County began its own public school education for African Americans (Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society 2009:46). There was also the Halltown School for black students, which offered classes in the basement of a black church in Halltown until 1901, when it was closed by the School Board who intended to build a school located more equidistant between Halltown and Engle (ibid.).

In 1908, Tom Shelton's grandfather built a one-room school for black children behind the Halltown Memorial Chapel [see Figure 21]; it remained open until 1930 when students were transferred to the Grand View School [see Figure 22].



**Figure 21. Halltown Memorial Chapel, formerly the Halltown Union Colored Sunday School, on County Route 340/12, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**



**Figure 22. Tom Shelton poses in front of the one-room schoolhouse built by his grandfather in Halltown, WV, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

Storer College was still in existence at the time and offered many levels of education: a four-year high school program, a two-year elementary teacher training program, a two-year junior college program, and separate courses focusing on homemaking and agriculture.

Until the 1960s, education in Harpers Ferry and its environs remained separate and unequal. In 1926, the West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools declared that the school districts were required to pay tuition for students if they did not maintain a high school for those students, but the Jefferson County School Board refused to pay tuition or build a high school for black students (Harpers Ferry District 1933). Prior to 1938, the high school program offered through Storer College was the only “high school” for African Americans in the entire state of West Virginia, which severely limited their educational opportunities. Some black residents of Harpers Ferry attended the Storer program while others traveled to other cities to complete high school, but most did not receive an education past the eighth grade. In 1942, black students finally received a local high school when Page-Jackson High School opened in Charles Town. White students attended Harpers Ferry Elementary (later Shipley Elementary) and Harpers Ferry High School, which shared a building on Washington Street until a new white high school was built in Bolivar. A 1929 bond proposal for new school buildings in the town included \$15,000 for a brick four-room building with auditorium for black children (the future Grand View Elementary School), \$60,000 for a white high school, and \$22,000 for a white elementary school in Millville (National Register of Historic Places 2001:8). The School Board eliminated the auditorium and bathrooms for the black school and reduced the allotted funds to \$10,000, whereas an additional \$20,500 was allotted to the white high school in order to construct modern bathrooms, an

auditorium, and gymnasium (ibid.). Tom Shelton recalled during our interview that when he and his six siblings attended Grand View, they still used outhouses:

All my brothers and sisters went there, you know, there were seven of us, so, yeah, when I got there they still had the outhouses back there but [my sister] would always tell us that they were scared, you know, because they're back in the woods behind the school, we had a little play area where we'd play ball and games and whatever, and a little merry-go-round around the corner and some swings, but it's a wooded area behind there and there were some outhouses. And we still used them when I went there but we didn't use them that much, we had indoor plumbing.

The Grand View School, Page-Jackson High School, and Eagle Avenue Elementary in Charles Town should have been integrated as a result of the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that ruled racially segregated education unconstitutional, but these black schools remained open with a “freedom of choice” plan (ibid.). This plan appeared to be nondiscriminatory, as it gave white students the choice to attend black schools, but none did so, and the schools continued to operate as segregated spaces (Bushong 1972:385). The Federal Government forced Jefferson County to desegregate in 1965, so Grand View Elementary and Page-Jackson High School were closed and black students were sent to local white schools. The C.W. Shipley Elementary School, the first integrated school built in the area, was established on Route 340 just west of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar in 1971, and a new district-wide school for all students in Harpers Ferry, Charles Town, and Shepherdstown opened in Shenandoah Junction in 1973.

## Building Community in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans formed a community in Harpers Ferry that was fostered of self-sufficiency and interdependence. While families did not have a great deal of money, they took pride in themselves and their appearance. As Sharon Spriggs put it in our interview with her, people were “clean and poor.” As children, residents did not have many material items, including games and toys, but they managed to create their own fun. As Tom Shelton told us during our interview:

But growing up here, oh I thought it was kind of fun, ‘cause all the neighbor kids, we, there were kids playing, you know, baseball, laughin’, having a good time, runnin’ through the woods, back here to the KOA campground, uh, it was a Civil War Showcase at that time, and my mother worked back there, and of course we ran through the woods playing Cowboys and Indians, Robin Hood, and whatever, having a good old time, and we was always back in the woods, Murphy’s farm. Mrs. Murphy owned the farm, the Park Service now owns it, and we used to go back there and she would let us run through the fields and whatever. Cause they were big fields, you know, and back then we didn’t have any computers [*laughs*], so we was out havin’ a ball, this was a good old time, you know...

Rhonda Smith and Sharon Spriggs also had fond memories of playing in their neighborhood:

Megan Bailey: What did you do outside? What were some of those things that you--?

Rhonda Smith: Ooh! Played games! Like we said, we didn't have air conditioning, so in the summertime--my mother taught, we never went to daycare or anything like that. We'd play--

Sharon Spriggs: Hopscotch, we'd play--

RS: Red light, green light... I mean, we stayed outside; one or two o' clock in the morning our parents were sitting on the porch, watching us; burning a little fire so to keep the mosquitos down.

SS: But we just played, we chased each other, we played hide-and-seek--

RS: Biked around the neighborhood...

Interviews with older black residents of Harpers Ferry demonstrate that they have had generally positive, even idyllic memories of the town in the mid-twentieth century. In a 2014 interview with Elaine Eff, Harpers Ferry resident and Storer College alumna Margaret Jackson Smelley described the community as small, safe, and close-knit, where people worked hard but also enjoyed leisure time, and generally got along:

Margaret Jackson Smelley: People were kind to one another. We all seem to have gotten along, you know. And if we didn't get along, we'd tell you where you were wrong. And everybody didn't get along. Everybody wasn't for everybody getting along, but to the most part, we were. And I found out, too, that if you needed some help or something like that, that people didn't have a problem helping, whereas nowadays, people could care less. But as a matter of fact, you didn't know that you didn't have because everybody was the same category, you know, whether you were white, black, or green, everybody was in the same category. You had what you had, and you made the best of what you had.

Elaine Eff: What kind of town was Harpers Ferry when you lived there?

MJS: It was a quiet town because you didn't have any clubs and all. If you did have a beer hall, I think it might have been someplace down on Union Street, but there were no clubs or anything in Harpers Ferry. You had to be entertaining yourself, you know. If you wanted to go out, you had to go to Charles Town. There wasn't even—we never had a McDonald's, never had a restaurant, you know. If we wanted to go to a restaurant, we went across the bridge in Maryland off of 340 at truck-stop, you know, but you had to—somebody had to be able to drive to get you over there.

Spriggs and Smith painted a similar picture of Harpers Ferry during our interview with them. The town, they said, was safe enough that it didn't even require a police presence and residents could leave their doors unlocked:

Rhonda Smith: You felt safe; you could go to bed at night and leave your doors *open*.

Sharon Spriggs: Open, right.

RS: You didn't -- we didn't have air conditioning, so you know the doors stayed open, the windows stayed open, it was safe. Like she said, we went to school here, you knew if you acted up on the front street if you were going to the little store, and you acted up between the store and home, your mother knew about it as soon as you got home [*laughs*].

SS: Before you got home. And everybody in the community raised everybody's kids. You didn't have that problem with, "Don't say nothin' to my child!" We didn't have that.

RS: "You'd *better* say something to my child" [*laughs*].

SS: Yes. We were taught to respect our elders, we were taught how to work. Everybody had a chore, we played outside a lot. We were just healthy kids. We were just happy, healthy kids.

Spriggs and Smith both described their experiences growing up in Harpers Ferry as positive because people were friendly to each other, always willing to "just stand around and chitchat," and had a generous spirit, helping each other if they were sick or needed any other kind of assistance.

In addition to interdependence, another quality that black interviewees emphasized about their community is self-sufficiency. When institutions were segregated or hostile to black residents, they created



their own churches, schools, and clubs, such as the Jefferson County Black Elks Lodge. In addition, Tom Shelton noted during our interview that there is a black cemetery behind the Anvil Restaurant on Washington Street in Harpers Ferry where all of his family is buried.

Harpers Ferry's African American residents tended to practice small-scale cultivation, usually in their backyards, to supplement their food intake from other sources. Sharon Spriggs recalled during our interview that a neighbor kept a goat, and both Spriggs's and Rhonda Smith's families raised chickens. Tom Shelton, who still lives on the same property that his grandfather purchased in two parts in 1901 and 1908, recalls that his family had pigs, chickens, and a garden in their backyard. Both Smith and Shelton observed that it was very common for families to have gardens and grow their own food. According to Shelton, "Everybody had their own gardens and whatever, and you canned your food. You didn't go to the store like they do now. You just went to the store for your flour and stuff like that."

Given the natural resources available in the area, it was not uncommon for people to supplement their diet with meat and plants they hunted and collected around Harpers Ferry. Tom Shelton described to us how his family participated in the collection of mushrooms:

Erve Chambers: Did people collect any, like, vegetable plants or plants or things like that out in the woods?

Tom Shelton: My dad and Mr. Bollinger, who I told you about, they would go out in the woods and find plants and stuff, and you could eat some of the stuff. My dad used to take me mushroom hunting and I learned a lesson there, I learned what a real mushroom looked like and not a toadstool. If you picked up one of them, you got your head smacked.

Shelton's family collected other plants, berries, and herbs in Harpers Ferry, a practice that he continues to this day:

Mrs. Shelton: Did you get your greens out of the -- did you grow your own greens? Your kale and your collards?

TS: No, the field greens, no, we went looking for them too. Now, you can grow them in the garden, and we did, once the garden would, when the garden was gone you could find field greens in your garden. But we would go out in the field and get our field greens, what they call field greens, and then they also had watercress, and some people get them confused. Watercress is in water, around water, and then field greens are out in the field. And we would go get them, and that was good eatin'. And I used to do that up until right before I got sick. I got field greens --

Mrs. Shelton: Ramps.

TS: And ramps, yeah. I got some of them in the freezer right now. People still do ramp hunting now. Of course you don't call it hunting, now you know, you know, people bought this property and they don't know what ramps are, you know. I do, and several other people, and you just ask them if you can go get some ramps and if they don't mind then you just go pick 'em. And wild onions. We have one guy -- matter of fact he's down there now, he's the work leader. We call him Tick -- I can't think of what his real name is, we called him Tick. Believe me, if you said Tick, they could point him out to you. He's a work leader at the maintenance shop. Now he knows a lot of wild plants and stuff because I worked with him one year and I've been trying to get him to show me what it was cause I hadn't paid it much attention, but there's some kind of plant out there and it look just like a green, as I remember, it looked just like a green weed or whatever, and he went over and said, oh, this is so-and-so, and he picked it up, and he said, put it in your mouth. I looked at him for a few minutes, I said, some of the things you been walking around, picking up and eating, I said, I'm a little leery. But it's green so I put it in my mouth and it tasted like black licorice. And we went back down to the park, and of course he would always say, try this. And he gave it to this one woman that was in the office and she looked at me and I said, it's ok. I said, yeah, I don't blame you for looking, cause he picks up some wild stuff. And she tried it and people were hollering for it later on. I said, see what you started? I probably gotta go out and get a whole field

full of this stuff and pass it around to the people.

Mrs. Shelton: And wild berries, there's wild berries up on Bolivar Heights. And there's some down by the river that way, and people, you see people just picking them, you know. Did your family get ginseng?

TS: Dad did. There is ginseng around here, too. They tell me there's some back here in Murphy's Farm but I've never found it, you know, cause we'd work back there, and after I retired I'd walk back there, but I never found it.

Mrs. Shelton: Didn't you have some sassafras roots one time that you had gotten somewhere?

TS: I got that from Jimmy Pritchard's yard.

Mrs. Shelton: He grew it?

TS: The sassafras tree. Cause he put too much in, he put a big chunk in and you'd better get a big pot. You don't wanna drink too much of that sassafras tea and be too far from the bathroom.

Tom Shelton's family also engaged in hunting, particularly for deer, squirrel, rabbit, possum, raccoons, groundhogs, pheasant, turkey, and quail, all to supplement the family's other food sources.

Members of these families filled a variety of occupations in the mid-twentieth century. Many black residents entered the military during World War II and remained there until retirement (Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society Inc. 2009:1). Though many of Harpers Ferry's industries had closed by this point, the Halltown Paperboard Company (now Ox Paperboard) continued to operate, and in fact still does to this day, 140 years after it opened [see Figure 23]. As he told us during our interview, several of Tom Shelton's relatives worked at the paper mill, located less than four miles from Harpers Ferry, and Shelton himself tried his hand at mill work, but he was not suited for it:

Tom Shelton: Yeah, I worked there 3 weeks and I said well I won't hold up this tradition here! You think it smells bad on the outside, inside's even worse, that one area. But I said no, I said nah, the buck stops here. I said I don't know how y'all did it, I said it stinks on the outside, the whole town stinks [laughs].

Erve Chambers: I guess you get used to it.

TS: No, no, not me.



**Figure 23. Ox Paperboard Company in Halltown, WV, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**



Thanks to the growing tourism industry, businesses in Lower Town provided employment opportunities. Sharon Spriggs recalled working as a young person at a Dairy Queen located on High Street, where the Coffee Mill now stands:

Sharon Spriggs: Oh, we *ran* the Dairy Queen. We ran that Dairy Queen.

Megan Bailey: Oh! *[laughs]*

SS: Because then people were allowed to come down *in* there. I mean, we would be in there from 6 o' clock in the morning until well after 9 o' clock in just a steady line of people, just a steady line of people. I worked my butt off down there. We had a blast though, and then walk back up the hill at night.

Given the significant presence of federal agencies and institutions in the area, it is unsurprising that many Harpers Ferry residents, both black and white, have been government employees at some point in their lives. Both Sharon Spriggs and Rhonda Smith's fathers worked for the Veterans Affairs (VA) Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia, about eighteen miles from Harpers Ferry. This was a common practice for veterans in the years following World War II; Spriggs observed of the men in their family, "When they came out of the service, they all went to the VA." Rhonda Smith also worked at the VA Center before she was married.

The presence of the park also provided employment. Spriggs's mother worked for the park in maintenance, her brothers also worked for the park, and Spriggs herself worked for the park for forty years in a variety of positions in different departments, including Maintenance and Upward Mobility, a career development program. Similarly, Rhonda Smith's mother also worked for the National Park Service, and Smith worked for them as a senior in high school and then later in life in the Equal Opportunity Office. She held several other government jobs, including secretary to the Harpers Ferry mayor and police chief, and clerk in the juvenile courts in Winchester, Virginia. Tom Shelton also held a variety of government-affiliated positions, working with the Young Adult Conservation Corps and Job Corps in the 1970s, and working at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park at different points beginning in 1973. There, he held positions with a variety of programs, including living history, restoration, and maintenance.

It is clear that whatever opinion people may have about how the government enhances or detracts from their town, it has played a major role in generating jobs following the decline of industry in Harpers Ferry. The park has provided opportunities for work experience, career advancement, and financial stability for residents of Harpers Ferry.

## Racial Inequality in Harpers Ferry

It is apparent that a community's associations with a place are not all linked to pleasant memories. They can also be expressed in recollections of past inequities, suffering and trauma. African Americans' experiences in Harpers Ferry were profoundly influenced by the segregationist policies and social norms that restricted them in terms of their living situation, occupation, and leisure activities. Prejudices and stereotypes dating back to the antebellum era were slow to fade; West Virginia clung to its racist and segregationist policies long after they had been made illegal. The racist vitriol of the nineteenth century was intense, and it wasn't until the mid-to-late twentieth century that these opinions softened. African American residents

displayed resilience in the face of racism, which was a fact of life in Harpers Ferry.

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the racism and discrimination aimed at African Americans in the United States was often backlash against incidents when African Americans gained legal, economic, or social status or rights, i.e., any time when African Americans were not properly “staying in their place” and occupying a subordinate position. Free African Americans and freed slaves were particularly targeted for these opinions, since white residents thought their freedom was undeserved. Whites were confused and upset by what they perceived as a threat to the natural order of things, and felt their own status in the socioeconomic and racial hierarchy was in danger. Poor whites apparently felt this most acutely; given their already-precarious situation due to their lower class status, they believed that they had the most to lose if African Americans were given rights, freedoms, and access to resources and power. A *Spirit of Jefferson* supplemental from 1890 ran an article that predicted an upending of the social order if black residents enjoyed a higher status: “To colonize the state with the blacks of the south. West Virginia working men to be turned out of the mines and the shops, to give place for the Negro of the south” (Moyer et al. 2004:37). Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the *Spirit of Jefferson* ran many articles arguing that African Americans were lazy, stupid, thieving, and not worthy of equal rights. They argued that free blacks could not be trusted with additional resources; they would be squandered due to African Americans’ perceived laziness and lack of intelligence. An article published by the *Virginia Free Press* in 1857 told a cautionary tale about the free black population in the Caribbean, warning that a similar fate could befall those who put too much trust in the abilities of African Americans:

San Domingo was, sixty years ago, the most beautiful, the most flourishing, the healthiest island, that the sun ever shone upon -- Its production of sugar, and all those tropical articles of commerce, was immense -- It fell into the hands of a free black population, and while they themselves are scarcely above their brethren of Congo, or the ivory coast, in the arts of civilized life, they have converted the Paradise around them into a sterile, and appalling waste. Not one pound of sugar is exported from the Island, and nothing is Cultivated but such crops as are necessary to keep body and soul together. In less than a quarter of a century, the free negroes have contrived to make Jamaica a fair match for San Domingo, and last of all, Liberia, which promised so fairly, has disappointed the hopes of its sanguine friends, and confirmed the worst predictions of those who always looked upon the experiment with distrust.

A major topic of discussion was how to control the free black population in order to preserve the status quo and the so-called natural hierarchy. Among the white population of Jefferson County there was a constant fear of the free black population growing “too large,” as this 1846 article in the *Spirit of Jefferson* indicates:

By reference to the Census of 1840, we find that there were at that period 603 Free Negroes in Jefferson County. At this time, arguing from the increase in our own town, we believe the number is near one thousand. With some few exceptions, this population is the worst that we could be inflicted with. They are worthless, degraded and debased; and too lazy to work, they pilfer even for the necessities of life. We scarce know what course to recommend to prevent a further increase of this population among us, but really think it is a subject worthy of the serious consideration of our administrators of the law.

The Reconstruction era brought new fears, as it would provide African Americans with more rights and freedoms. In the late 1860s, it seemed likely that African American men would receive suffrage in the near future, a fact that provoked outrage and a condescending faux concern among white residents of Jefferson County. A writer for the *Spirit of Jefferson* reported in 1867 that he hoped intelligent African Americans, “will take sides with their old masters, in grappling with radicalism” and reject suffrage, and predicted that the

“lower strata of the black population,” the “lazy vagabonds who have hung on the Freedmen's Bureau,” will not listen to reason and will pursue the right to vote. The establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 was a major source of contention among the white population of Jefferson County. There was much speculation that this institution would turn free African Americans into social parasites who would live on government assistance indefinitely rather than becoming self-sufficient and independent; need for assistance was held up as a character defect rather than the logical result of decades of disadvantage and impoverishment. Following the Civil War, newspaper articles reported on the suffering and devastation among Confederate families in detail and complained that the Freedmen's Bureau wasted government money in support of lazy African Americans. Freed slaves were portrayed as conniving and manipulative, insisting on receiving free food, room and board, and other resources, but unwilling to work in exchange. A poem printed in an 1865 issue of the *Spirit of Jefferson* told a story in which the white narrator is imposed upon late at night by a freed black man who demands food and refuses to leave until he receives it. The poem, which parodies Edgar Allan Poe's “The Raven,” reads in part:

Back into the fire place looking, where my ham and eggs were cooking,  
Shaking, quaking -- as no mortal ever shook or quaked before --  
I then heard this ugly sinner, mutter but these words -- "Some dinner!"  
'Twas the only word he'd spoken, 'twas the only word, I'm sure --  
When I picked up pluck and answered, "I shall feed you nevermore."  
This I said, and nothing more.

Then his impudence beginning, and his gums exposed in grinning --  
With a smile by no means winning, did he view me from the door,  
And coolly said, "Your treat, man -- I'll ne'er go in the street, man,  
Till I get something to eat, man, I'll ne'er leave your door;  
I'll never leave your chamber, though you beat me till I roar,  
Never leave you -- nevermore!"

Even when it became clear that, in spite of white residents' protests, African Americans would indeed receive important resources and begin to participate more fully and equally in white-dominated society, white individuals still had trouble accepting the new status quo. As Andrew Kahrl (2008:67) points out, “African Americans' sizable and growing presence in Harpers Ferry as residents, students, and tourists only further inflamed local whites' anxieties.”

By 1890, African Americans comprised 26.5 percent of the town's total population, a larger percentage than any other town in West Virginia (Kahrl 2008:64). Harpers Ferry had a sizeable black professional and business class compared to other towns in the state and the South. Several black families owned businesses in town, with the most prominent being William and Sarah Lovett, who had “almost a monopoly in the hotel accommodations in Harpers Ferry” (ibid.). More than two-thirds of black residents owned their homes, and over three-fourths owned some kind of real estate in the area (ibid.). Furthermore, at this time many black residents were not ghettoized to an undesirable part of town; most lived at or near Camp Hill, where Storer College was located. This was a beautiful, well-kept area that was desirable because it was situated on a hill, safe from the rivers' frequent flooding, and had stunning views that attracted wealthy visitors in the summer. The presence of stable, even prosperous black residents in Harpers Ferry was a serious threat for what it represented to the town's white population:

African Americans' efforts at social autonomy and mobility in the post-emancipation era were invariably interpreted as a threat to the racial status quo. . . . Indeed, as evidenced throughout the Jim Crow South, whites' cries of black barbarism and primitivism were often loudest when the threat of black mobility seemed most acute (ibid.).

It was likely threat of this black mobility that made the white population protest the existence of Storer College following its establishment in 1869. Harpers Ferry resident Mary Louise Newcomer Moore recalled, "There was no warm acceptance of [Storer] College in the community" (Porter 2011:98). Many white members of the community refused to support Storer and consistently tried to have it closed. Students and faculty were targeted for harassment; one black faculty member reported that in the early days of the school, "It is unusual for me to go to the post office without being hooted at and twice I have been stoned on the streets at noon-day" (Anon. 2006: 21). Students were warned that for their safety they should avoid spending too much time away from campus because they were unwelcome in much of Harpers Ferry's commercial district (Moyer et al. 2004:36). In addition, at least one Storer student reported leaving the college due to threats to his safety from the Ku Klux Klan (Moyer and Shackel 2008:152). Members of the town also placed a burning cross on Richard McKinney's lawn when he became the first black president of Storer (ibid.).

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Ku Klux Klan had a nationwide resurgence and had a presence in Harpers Ferry where they antagonized the town's black population. The organization ensured their visibility in the town by holding several gatherings, marches, and parades. According to resident Isabel Kern Flanagan, Klan members burned a cross in reaction to the marriage of a white Bolivar resident to a black woman (Porter 2011:119). In August of 1923, the Klan held an event where about forty Klansmen and forty to fifty white residents of Harpers Ferry marched from downtown Harpers Ferry, passing Storer College, to Bolivar Heights for a conference (Moyer and Shackel 2008:152). Charles Knott, a resident of nearby Bakerton, recalled in a 1986 interview (Theriault 2009:434) how the KKK used its visibility to instill fear in the black population and attempt to control them:

My uncle [Brian Houser] told me about the Ku Klux Klan one time. They had a Ku Klux Klan out at Harper's Ferry, but yet they had 4 or 5 fellas at Bakerton that belonged to it. So the colored fellas at Duffields [a small community west of Harpers Ferry] got out of hand one night, and they was just really controlling everything up there, doing things they didn't have no business. So the Ku Klux Klan got together, and they had about 15 or 20 in white suits and walked up the track. They rode so far and they walked up the track to Duffields. From that day on, you never had any trouble with the colored people from Duffields or Shenandoah Junction. They just calmed right down. They were scared. My uncle told me, "They never cause no trouble. But a colored fella, if you scare him good, he'll straighten out and behave himself. But if you give him an inch, they'll take a mile. That's what they were doing up there." They got together and just scared them. They had a headquarters at Harper's Ferry.

While reports of Klan activity are most common in the first half of the twentieth century, they continue to have a small presence today. Multiple local residents noted that members of the Klan live on "the mountain," that is, Loudoun Heights, and one resident informed us that that area does not have any black residents due to the discrimination they would face there. For years, Klan members have gathered at Harpers Ferry around the anniversary of the John Brown raid for an annual protest, the most recent one having taken place in 2014. Not all of the participants are from Harpers Ferry originally; there are active KKK cells in Frederick County and Loudoun County as well, so the events draw people from several different areas. The park has a designated First Amendment area where protesters can demonstrate without interfering with park

operations and events. Residents and visitors alike complain about the Klan's presence, arguing that honoring a hate group's First Amendment rights is harmful to everyone else and the Klan does not deserve the protection afforded to them by the park. A reporter from the *Washington Post* was similarly taken aback by the situation:

About a dozen or so people showed up in white sheets and pointy hoods. And I assure you they were treated a lot better than they treat others. For starters, the Klan arrived in white vans chauffeured and escorted by U.S. Park Police. Then they were guarded by a phalanx of law enforcement officers from federal, state and local agencies. Civil rights activists in the last century should have been so fortunate. In a racial irony to top all racial ironies, some of those assigned to protect the Klan were black (Milloy 2006).

This is a misconception on the part of the public; the park does not staff these rallies to protect the Klan, but to protect the public and uphold the Constitution when a First Amendment request is made (Mia Parsons, personal communication).

A park employee observed that the number of Klansmen participating in these protests is dwindling, but the group still has some presence in the Harpers Ferry area. None of our interviewees mentioned the KKK or feeling threatened by them, and in fact the counter-protests tend to be larger than the Klan events. Local institutions such as the Camp Hill-Wesley and Engle United Methodist Churches have planned community festivals to coincide with the Klan rallies in order to “encourage and celebrate harmony among neighbors” (Reilly 1999). Though Klan members have lost much of their visibility, their enduring presence – even in small numbers – speaks to the fact that racial harmony has not been totally achieved in Harpers Ferry.

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, segregation continued to be pervasive across West Virginia, even after its legality was challenged by civil rights activists, courts, and politicians. The separation of races existed in public spaces, businesses, and private spaces. In 1961, fifty percent of restaurants, seventy percent of hotels and motels, and eighty-five percent of pools in West Virginia still discriminated against African Americans (WV State Archives 2015). Black World War II veterans returned to their communities expecting better treatment in return for their service to the country, but they were still confronted with discrimination in employment, education, housing, public accommodation, and justice. For example, African Americans were not allowed to serve on petit or grand juries, or sit in the front seats of inter or intra-state bus routes; they were required to sit in separate waiting rooms at the bus and train stations, and stay in separate areas of hospitals (ibid.). A 1959 study by the West Virginia Advisory Committee on behalf of the United States Commission on Civil Rights found that little progress had been made since 1954 in regards to employment of African Americans. It was difficult for black residents of Jefferson County to find work in a sector other than service or manual labor; some of the largest employers for black workers in the region were the Charles Town Race Track, the Millville stone quarries, Miller Fertilizer Mill, Goetz's Harness Factory, Halltown Paperboard Company, and Powhatan Brass Foundry (ibid.). Many black women worked as domestics, while black men worked as janitors in downtown stores, hotels, and schools, or as handymen for private families and as laborers on the Baltimore & Ohio and Norfolk & Western Railroads (ibid.). In addition, many black families lived and worked on farms as tenant farmers. A white resident of Harpers Ferry recalled that his father, a tenant farmer, worked with African Americans on farms, but there was still a “slave mentality” where the African Americans did not eat with the white employees and did not enter the main house.

The Jefferson County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was organized and chartered in June 1956 and began working to redress these segregationist policies and practices. It was successful in desegregating interstate buses and forcing the Jefferson County Circuit Court to allow African Americans to serve on petit and grand juries. The organization also provided legal assistance when African Americans were the victims of discriminatory practices. In 1960, the branch became inactive and the Jefferson County Civic League was organized. The Civic League was also engaged in desegregation efforts and pushed for equal opportunities for blacks; the organization helped desegregate the Charles Town Hospital, the Jefferson County Red Cross swimming program, and public schools, and advocated for equal employment opportunities. The Jefferson County NAACP was rechartered in 1963 and joined the Civic League to tackle school desegregation. The organizations contacted the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, who directed the Jefferson County Board of Education to desegregate its schools, which finally occurred in 1966, twelve years after the Supreme Court desegregation decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Black residents of Harpers Ferry and the surrounding area had varying reactions to the discrimination they faced during their childhood through adulthood. A survey of oral histories and interviews reveal a variety of recollections; some remembered Harpers Ferry as a place where black and white residents peacefully coexisted and formed close and lasting friendships. During our interview with Sharon Spriggs and Rhonda Smith, the women recalled that when they were growing up in the 1950s through 1970s:

Sharon Spriggs: Back then everybody, yeah everybody knew everybody and everybody went down there. Everybody, like I said, they hung out all the time and that's another thing. I don't know if Rhonda brought it up--we never had a black/white issue. As kids there, were some of the older people but we knew to stay away from them but the kids in general we never had that.

Rhonda Smith: We sure didn't.

Other residents recalled that there was peace as long as each community “stayed in its place” and maintained a sort of separate-but-equal existence. Many found Harpers Ferry to be downright hostile to black residents.

During an interview with Elaine Eff in 2013 Alvin Catlett recalled that in the mid-twentieth century:

Harpers Ferry was tough on black folks back then. And, yes, they had their own little area, but going into town, it was tough. It was tough going into town. The teachers, many of them, if not all of them, were non-black, and they were catching heck as well. They were having some tough times.

Cynthia Oates, who attended Storer College from 1953 to 1955, also remembers Harpers Ferry as being very unfriendly to the black students of Storer, as she describes in this interview with Steve Warwick from 2013:

SW: Did you do much in Harpers Ferry?

Cynthia Oates: No.

SW: Shop or anything?

CO: No, it was very prejudiced, and so we really did not have much of a relationship with the people in Harpers Ferry at all.

SW: So, those same segregation policies were in place with a number of the stores or restaurants that they were here.

CO: Yeah.

SW: And so were a lot of those then off limits to the students here?

CO: We just didn't go to—I mean, you know where you could go and where you couldn't go. So, you didn't bother. Now, there was a drugstore right across from the Episcopal Church on the main highway, Mr. Rathbone. Isn't that strange, I could remember his name. But he and his wife were very nice, always treated the students very well.

SW: And so students were able to go to the drugstore?

CO: Oh, yeah, uh huh.

SW: And that was one of the few places that you could go.

CO: Yeah.

SW: And how about, did the townspeople ever interfere with the college?

CO: No.

SW: Everyone just stayed separate.

CO: Yeah, everybody just stayed in their own place.

In instances and places where racist policies and laws did not formally exist to control African Americans' movement and behavior, there was often an unspoken or implicit understanding about which places and activities were accessible to black residents of Harpers Ferry. Interviews with alumni of Storer College are telling in this respect; almost all of the interviewees mentioned a Rathbone Drugstore in Harpers Ferry. A combination drug store and soda fountain, it was one of the few businesses in town that appealed to youth. However, many noted that while African Americans could spend money there—buy a soda, a comic book, etc. – they were not allowed to sit and eat there.

Charles Town was larger and more vibrant than Harpers Ferry, so it was a popular place to shop and spend leisure time. However, it was also known for its segregationist policies and unfriendliness toward African Americans, a fact that deterred black residents of Harpers Ferry from visiting certain places or from going to Charles Town at all. Cynthia Oates recalled in a 2013 interview with Steve Warwick the limitations she and other African Americans dealt with there:

Steve Warwick: So, Charles Town was the main destination.

Cynthia Oates: That was the main destination for us, yeah.

SW: And what did you do there?

CO: Well, you would go shopping. There wasn't too much you could do because it was very segregated during that time. So, there were a lot of stores you couldn't even go into, and you definitely could not go into a restaurant at that time.

SW: And so there were no restaurants in Charles Town?

CO: Oh, no, unh unh. No. Not unless you went into a black-owned place.

Another Storer College alumni, Elbert Norton, recalled during a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff that his fellow black students had an awareness of which places would serve them and which ones would not, and acted accordingly:

We knew that if we went to the movie in Charles Town—they had two movies in Charles Town, one down in Ranson and the other in Charles Town. The one in Charles Town, you had to sit up in the balcony, but in Ranson, you could sit anywhere, see? So, we would go to the movie in Ranson.

Sharon Spriggs also referenced this theater during our interview with her, but claims that its policy of segregation didn't bother her; she didn't care where she sat as long as she could see the movie.

According to a recorded conversation among three members of the NAACP (Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society Inc. 2011), Charles Town also had several restaurants with discriminatory policies. One of the participants, George Rutherford, noted that West Street in Charles Town was the black commercial part of town (popularly referred to as Dog Town), so African Americans tended to remain in that area for their safety and comfort. If they ventured out of this area and patronized white businesses, they were often met with inferior treatment. Margaret Jackson Smelley recalled in a 2014 interview with Elaine Eff that black patrons of Charles Town's Southern Restaurant had to go through an alleyway to the restaurant's back window to order a hamburger, though she always refused to do so. Similarly, local resident James Tolbert recalled that African Americans were not allowed to eat in the restaurant located inside Charles Washington Hall in Charles Town. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Jefferson County chapter of the NAACP—of which Tolbert was a member—decided to visit white businesses around the county and force integration. They went to New Central Restaurant in downtown Charles Town, where they sat at the counter and ordered drinks. They suffered no negative consequences at the time, but normally most restaurants only allowed African Americans to go to the kitchen to order their food, sometimes through a hole in the wall. Tolbert pointed out that the one benefit to this policy was that he became acquainted with all of the restaurant's black cooks, who would give him larger sandwiches and hamburgers. In general, however, the restaurant made African Americans feel very unwelcome. When asking black customers to leave, restaurant workers at New Central made a big fuss, "whooping and hollering," in contrast to the quieter, more subtle methods used by other businesses to discourage African Americans from coming. Rutherford and Tolbert noted in the NAACP-sponsored discussion that the New Central suffers to this day because African Americans refuse to patronize the restaurant; they still remember the discrimination they experienced and feel uncomfortable there (Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society Inc. 2011).

In contrast to the opinions described above, some African American residents felt that segregation, discrimination, and racism in Harpers Ferry were tolerable or "not that bad." Elbert Norton, an alumnus of Storer College, emphasized that there "were no problems. Just was no problem like that. We didn't have those kind of problems in that part of Jefferson County." Dewitt Jacobs, who attended Storer College 1944-1948, expressed a similar opinion in a 2013 interview with Steve Warwick:

Steve Warwick: And how about, were there any segregation policies in place in Bolivar or Harpers Ferry while you were there?

Dewitt Jacobs: No, they weren't that bad, no. Even in the school, well, after I left, the schools integrated, right? After I graduated. But before then, they were all in different schools.



SW: And so there were no places that you feel like you couldn't go to in town?

DJ: No.

SW: And how did the people of Harpers Ferry feel about the college and the students?

DJ: I think they liked it because it was something to do. It give them—you know, watch the people, see them come down, the traffic, right.

SW: And do you think there was any interference with the town over the college or harassment of students?

DJ: Unh unh.

It is possible that Storer College students have a different understanding of the racial politics of Harpers Ferry because they were in a predominantly black environment and did not often leave campus or interact with the local townspeople. Elbert Norton, who attended Storer from 1951 to 1955, shared an opinion to that effect during a 2013 interview:

Elaine Eff: Do you remember any racial incidents or civil rights activities when you were there as a student?

Elbert Norton: We didn't have any. We didn't have that kind of stuff. We were up on that hill. By being up on that hill there, we were in our own world. Everybody had their place. We didn't have any problems during that time.

Jane Davis Reeves, who graduated from Storer College in 1950, realized in retrospect that many things she had accepted as “normal” at that time were actually not acceptable at all but she didn’t realize it during her college years because she was “in a cloistered, safe world.” She described in an interview with Elaine Eff how isolation might have worked to the favor of Storer students:

Jane Davis Reeves: Those were—looking back now, on how things have progressed, I realize that segregation was a terrible thing, and many people are still fighting the Civil War. They still are. It's hard to change men's hearts. But we had a social life of our own, and that was sufficient until you knew and saw some other way, like when we came to Harrisburg, of course. You see white people all the time, but down there, it was, you stayed in your community, and children adapt. That's the way it was, you know. You do what you have to do, as Maya Angelou says, and Oprah quotes her often. When you know better, you do better, but if everything, if that's all you've known, you make your peace with it until you can do better, and that's the way life should always be.

Elaine Eff: Were you aware of the Niagara movement or the NAACP?

JDR: No, no.

EE: Tell me about that in a sentence, how that whole movement played out on campus.

JDR: I was like a little butterfly [larva] in a cocoon to be a butterfly. I was not aware. I was not aware of the outside society, only my family, which was large. My mother was one of twelve children. My family, the church people, and my college people. I was unaware. I never even thought nationally, statewide. I didn't think about that.

In general, black interviewees’ comments regarding the racism and discrimination they faced often denied that Harpers Ferry had any racial issues, but almost in the same breath described examples of segregation in public schools and local businesses. On the surface, this seems like a strange sort of cognitive dissonance. One explanation could be that these individuals were interviewed by white people and were

hesitant to reveal strong negative opinions regarding oppressive practices perpetrated by whites. Another interpretation is that those who grew up with segregationist policies found it to be normal, if irritating or unfair. Not having known any other environment, however, the subtle and overt discriminatory policies didn't seem "so bad"; black residents implicitly accepted and tolerated it as the status quo. When interviewed by Elaine Eff in 2013, local resident Russell Roper made an observation to that effect:

Everybody knew what segregation was. You came from a segregation society. You was in a segregation society, and you accepted it. And once you accept things to a certain extent, even though you don't like it, you work with it, and that's what you have to do.

In addition, while racism was a fact of life in Harpers Ferry, few interviewees reported having witnessed or experienced incidents of aggressive harassment, bullying, assault, name-calling, etc. Perhaps racism seemed less harsh because it rarely took the form of overtly violent conflicts between white and black residents. In any case, in spite of inhabiting an environment that was not always particularly friendly to African Americans, most interviewees had fond memories of growing up in Harpers Ferry, as exemplified by Rhonda Smith and Sharon Spriggs's comments during our interview:

Rhonda Smith: The good old days!

Megan Bailey: Sure sounds like it.

RS: And if I could wake up tomorrow and be back there...

Sharon Spriggs: I would be there.

RS: I would be there. And I say that all the time.

MB: Yeah.

SS: And I'd wanna raise my grandkids there. I really miss that.

RS: And start again.

## Traditional Associations

Though discrimination and racism undoubtedly shaped African Americans' experiences in Harpers Ferry, black residents did not exist in a totally isolated, segregated environment, and therefore they shared many experiences with their white counterparts. Having grown up in the same location and participated in many of the same activities and occupations, black and white residents naturally have many common associations with the land in and around Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Still, there are a few places and activities that appeared more often in the interviews and oral histories with Harpers Ferry's black residents.

Some places have an enduring significance to black residents, while others have been extremely meaningful at certain points in time, and less so at others. For example, following the Civil War, places related to John Brown's 1859 raid were regarded as sacred by many African Americans. Solomon Brown, a

Smithsonian Institution employee, began leading excursions to Harpers Ferry's federal armory in the 1880s to remind black visitors that this was a place "where brave black souls and white Americans of conscience cast the first stone against a dreaded institution that had, for generations, robbed them and their ancestors of their freedom and their heritage" (Kahrl 2008:61). For black Americans, Harpers Ferry came to symbolize the place where the first steps had been taken to undo the oppression of slavery and begin a period of cultural rebirth, and black visitors even took pieces of the armory's exterior to save as keepsakes (ibid.). However, by the twentieth century, the draw of the "sacred spot" was not as powerful as it once had been. During a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff, Harpers Ferry resident and Storer College alumna Dorothy Young Taylor said of John Brown's Fort, which was on campus when she attended:

We didn't pay much attention to it. It was just there. You know, a lot of times, we didn't even know who John Brown was at that time. We knew that that fort was there, and, you know, in talking maybe to somebody, "John Brown did this, and John Brown"—okay, you know, it didn't mean a whole lot. I guess, when you're young, and you don't really think about stuff like that, you know. It's other things that are on your mind. Now, now, of course, I know what it's all about, and I wish I was more involved in history at that time because everything was there for you to learn about the history of John Brown, but we just said, "Well, okay. The fort's here," that's it. It didn't mean a whole lot.

Tom Shelton noted in our interview with him that as a child he was aware of Harpers Ferry's history and knew about John Brown's raid, but the knowledge came from history books rather than a personal connection. He had a more casual relationship to his town's nineteenth century history:

Tom Shelton: Yeah, John Brown, so we all knew the history of the town, and I'd say we would play the battles and stuff, cause all the battles and stuff were fought right where we're sittin' at, to be honest, so this is all battlefields connected, Bolivar Heights and Murphy Farm, and that's where the Civil War was fought.

Erve Chambers: Sure.

TS: You know, where the visitor's center's at—it's the whole town.

EC: So you would play the battles?

TS: Yeah.

EC: How would that go?

TS: Huh?

EC: How would that go? How did it work?

TS: Ehh, you know, we didn't pick, you know, one side is the south, one side is the north, it didn't make no difference to us, you know. We was just kids, havin' a ball, you know.

Black residents' disconnection from the history of John Brown's raid may have been politically-motivated. African Americans may not have wanted to engaged with a history that would make them appear radical or attempting to radicalize other African Americans. During a 2013 interview with Steve Warwick, Cynthia Oates commented on the town's relationship to John Brown in the 1950s:

Steve Warwick: And what about John Brown Days? Were they holding John Brown Days?

Cynthia Oates: Oh, no, not around here [*laughs*]. That was a no-no. One of our instructors pointed out to us one time, he said, “Look around Bolivar and Harpers Ferry and Charles Town and see if you see anything named for John Brown.” Nothing.

Thanks to the presence of the park, there is a renewed interest in John Brown’s raid and the events of the Civil War. However, it is telling that our black interviewees mentioned him only in passing, if at all. The symbols of John Brown and his act of rebellion do not seem to galvanize local residents of today the way they did 150 years ago.

Storer College is one place that has an enduring significance to black residents. It was and is obviously important to its alumni, but it is valuable to residents of Harpers Ferry too, whether they attended the school or not. When it opened in 1867, Storer was the only institution in West Virginia that offered African Americans an education above the elementary school level, and one of the few that offered a college degree. For this reason, one author noted that “For many black Americans the Storer campus was hallowed ground” (Anon. 2006:21). This is perhaps an overstatement for present-day African American residents of Harpers Ferry; none of our interviewees gave any indication that the college was sacred to them. However, it was certainly an important part of their lives while they were growing up, as it provided social and educational activities and, as one resident and alumna put it, “It was a part of us. . . . Storer, I guess, is a part of our community in Harpers Ferry” (Eff 2014). Cynthia Oates recalled in an interview with Steve Warwick how living on Storer’s campus as a child helped her grow attached to the school, and inspired her desire to attend as a college student:

Well, you know, by me being exposed to Storer, living here for a year, we lived right off campus because, at that time, Storer owned two houses right at the back here, and there was another couple that lived in the house with their son, and their last names were Allen, and we shared the home together. But we came upon the campus, and, you know, did the activities. The students knew us, and I loved it here. I really did. So, when I got ready to go to college, that was one of the things I wanted to do was come back here to go to school.

Dorothy Young Taylor echoed these sentiments in a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff, saying:

Yeah, when we were growing up, when they had programs there that we wanted to go see, the parents wanted to go see, too, we just, we were there, you know, at different times. This was at Storer, of course. So, it was something that you just grew up with, you know. It was there, and it was a place everybody just wanted to go for certain reasons. When they had, like I said, programs or if they had choirs and things like that, programs like that, my parents went to see that.

Margaret Jackson Smelley also remembered Storer as an integral part of her childhood and her landscape:

Margaret Jackson Smelley: And, as far as you want to know if, how long I’ve been—well, I’ve been in Harpers Ferry all my life, and I’ve known Storer all my life. And as children, we used to go there all the time. So, it wasn’t a strange place for us because we lived there. We would go on Saturdays. They held movies on Saturday nights for us, and we were able to go and take our little popcorn and see a movie on Saturday night.

Elaine Eff: Where would that be?

MJS: It would be at the Storer College auditorium upstairs in Anthony Hall, where we would go. And, as I said, Storer was a part of our, an integral part of our lives because it was the school, and we knew a lot of the students that went to Storer. And the only thing that I regret is that as much time as I got there is when it closed because I’d enjoyed all the ins and outs.

One would be hard-pressed to find a longtime African American resident of Harpers Ferry who was not touched by the school in some way, whether they or a family member attended the college, worked there, or played there. For many black residents, Storer College has been “in the family” for a long time, and is a vital part of their experience growing up in the town. This is a testament to the changing significance of Storer.



**Figure 24. View of the Harpers Ferry Post Office on Washington Street, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

Those drawn to the school in the late nineteenth century may indeed have seen it as the “hallowed ground” Kahrl described, due to its close proximity to John Brown’s Fort, itself a symbol of abolitionism and freedom. Today, when residents discuss the importance of Storer, they are less concerned with its significance to African American history and more focused on the role it plays in maintaining a sense of community and kinship among people.

Black interviewees also cited particular streets in Harpers Ferry that were of importance to them. Sharon Spriggs and Rhonda Smith, lifelong residents of Harpers Ferry, recalled during our interview that most black families of the 1950s and 1960s—including their own—were concentrated on Putnam Street behind the post office or on Union Street, which connects Route 340 to the town’s main street, Washington [see Figure 24]. Spriggs explained in our interview that the concentration of her community around Putnam Street meant that schools, stores, and family were all within walking distance:



**Figure 25. First Zion Baptist Church on West Ridge Street in Harpers Ferry, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

I was born and raised here. I practically lived on my block, because the school was a block from my house, church was a block, half a block from my house, my grandparents were a half a block up the road, on one side of the family, my other grandparents on my father's side were down through my yard, my uncles and aunts, half a block from my house.

When we interviewed Tom Shelton, another lifelong resident of Harpers Ferry, he could only recall one black family that lived in Millville, and said all of his black friends lived in town behind the post office. A black church used to be located in that neighborhood behind the post office as well, according to Sharon Spriggs and Rhonda Smith:

RS: We all went to church together, we went to... the one in *my* backyard, and I mean backyard!

SS: There's a church—

RS: That was like an all-black church then and then it moved... but then we went there too for different events and functions; yeah, we went there too.

The church in question is the First Zion Baptist Church [see Figure 25], which was built by its members—many of whom likely were former slaves—in 1893, and served as the central meeting place for the black community during the twentieth century (Van Tassel 2016).

Spriggs also informed us that there was a wooded area next to her childhood home where her siblings, cousins, and friends played and built forts, and went sledding in the winter. The local black elementary school, Grand View, was located on the western end of Putnam Street, and as of 1993, is owned by the National Park Service and serves as the park's Ranger Station [see Figure 26]. Rhonda Smith observed of this area behind the post office that “it was all black families back there. Now it's not,” but Tom Shelton remarked that “their families still live back in that area,” suggesting that perhaps some black families remain there, but



**Figure 26. The former Grand View School, which now serves as the National Historical Park's Ranger Station, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

they are no longer in the majority. Another local resident reported that a black man, George Washington, owned a restaurant behind the post office and lived on Union Street (Chickering and Jenkins 1995). We also spoke with a Harpers Ferry resident who recalled that in the 1970s, the town had two separate black communities, one well-educated and composed of retired Storer College professors, and a working class black community that primarily lived behind the post office. Reportedly the two did not interact very much. In any case, it is clear that the area behind the Harpers Ferry Post Office, which includes West Ridge and Putnam Streets, is significant to black residents of Harpers Ferry.

## Italian Quarry Workers

Following the closing of the armory, limestone quarrying became one of Harpers Ferry's major industries and one of the few that continued from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. A limestone belt stretching from Maryland to the Shenandoah Valley provided this important mineral in the Eastern panhandle of West Virginia (National Park Service 2005:18). Quarrying operations took advantage of the proximity of this natural resource and engaged in the extraction and heat processing of dolomite and limestone to manufacture lime, cement, rock wool insulation, furnace lime, and lime flux (Chappel 1991:1). One of the first quarries was operated by John Semple in the 1760s near present-day Bakerton (Griffith 2003:23), but quarrying became more prevalent in the late nineteenth century. Interest in capitalizing on the local natural resources became more pronounced after the Civil War; in the 1880s and 1890s the Hoke Brothers and Harpers Ferry Lime Company had early operations around Harpers Ferry, and by the twentieth century a number of quarries operated in this region, including four based in the Harpers Ferry area: the Standard Lime and Stone Company, Keystone, Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation (also known as Blair Limestone), and Potomac Light and Power Company. Most of the workers from these companies lived in Millville, which is located about four miles southwest of Harpers Ferry. Millville was unusual for a company town because it was not owned by one company; employees of all the various quarries and plants in the vicinity lived in the same general area. At its peak between 1920 and 1940, 1100 quarry workers lived in Millville, with 636 of them being Standard Lime and Stone employees (Griffith 2003:26). Though the employees of the different companies tended to share churches, schools, stores, and other institutions, they lived in separate clusters based on employer. Keystone constructed forty houses for workers beyond the railroad tracks to the top of the hill on Blair Road; Blair Limestone workers lived in twenty-five houses between Keystone and Halltown, the Potomac Light and Power area consisted of twenty-four company houses near the power plant, and Standard Lime employees lived on Bloomery Road just north of Millville, in a neighborhood called Standard Hill (24). Mike Jenkins, the son of a Standard Lime and Stone employee, recalled in an interview with us that his father had told him that "there were like three villages and they all worked separately. . . . Even though they were probably within a mile and a half of each other they operated as separate communities. . . . I don't really know why they differentiated themselves, but they did always consider themselves different in those general areas."



This section is concerned with employees of the Standard Lime and Stone Company, which was the most prominent of those based in Millville. Daniel, William, and Joseph Baker, three brothers from Frederick County, Maryland, incorporated the company in 1888 with the intention to mine, quarry, manufacture, transport, and sell lime, which was largely untapped at that point (23). By 1900, the Baltimore-based business was operating three quarries in the Eastern Panhandle, two of which were in Millville and one in Bakerton, a few miles northwest of Harpers Ferry (*ibid.*). Limestone products were in such high demand that the Bakers expanded their holdings and were operating ten quarries in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia by the 1910s (NPS 2005:19), and according to the West Virginia Geological Society, in 1916 they were “the largest operating limestone company in the eastern Panhandle area [of West Virginia];” and “Mr. Daniel Baker was the pioneer in the limestone industry in this area, and his company at the present time ships the largest tonnage of any company in the field” (Chappel 1991:4). Millville was the most productive of the quarries, as the greatest amount of dolomite was recovered from that site (National Park Service 2005:19). Between 1901 and 1974, the Standard Lime and Stone Quarry plant in Millville was engaged in the production of furnace lime, rock wool, lime flux, and lime hydrate, which were then purchased by steel mills and local businesses in the Mid-Atlantic region” (Chappel 1991:1).

In this section we will discuss those who worked for Standard Lime and Stone Company and lived in the unincorporated community of Millville, with a special focus on the town’s Italian community, the largest immigrant group to work for the quarry. Italian laborers had a dramatic impact on the ethnic makeup of Harpers Ferry and the surrounding area; Census data show that no Italian-born foreigners were identified as residents in 1900 but in 1920 sixty-eight percent of foreign-born residents were Italian (Porter 2011:85).

## Millville

Founded in 1901, the Millville industrial site is the youngest of Standard Lime and Stone Company’s three quarries established in Jefferson County. It consists of an industrial plant area and a residential area set on 160 acres, which includes a quarry measuring 5,000 feet long, 250 feet wide, and 150 feet deep (Chappel 1991:3). The plant had designated areas for all of the stone processing operations, including excavating and crushing, refractory, rock wool, lime hydrate, and magnesium oxide (*ibid.*). The main purpose of the Millville quarry was to produce dolomite limestone for steel manufacturing; it was primarily shipped to Pittsburgh via the B&O Railroad (Porter 2011:43). As of 1908, Standard Lime was the only company in West Virginia working magnesium limestone or dolomite (Grimsley 1908:1144). Reportedly “the finest in the country,” the limestone was used to line furnaces in steel mills (*ibid.*). In addition, the plant crushed stone and burned it in lime kilns, produced rock wool – a fire-resistant insulation—and enriched dolomite with magnesium, an operation that was added around 1938-1939.

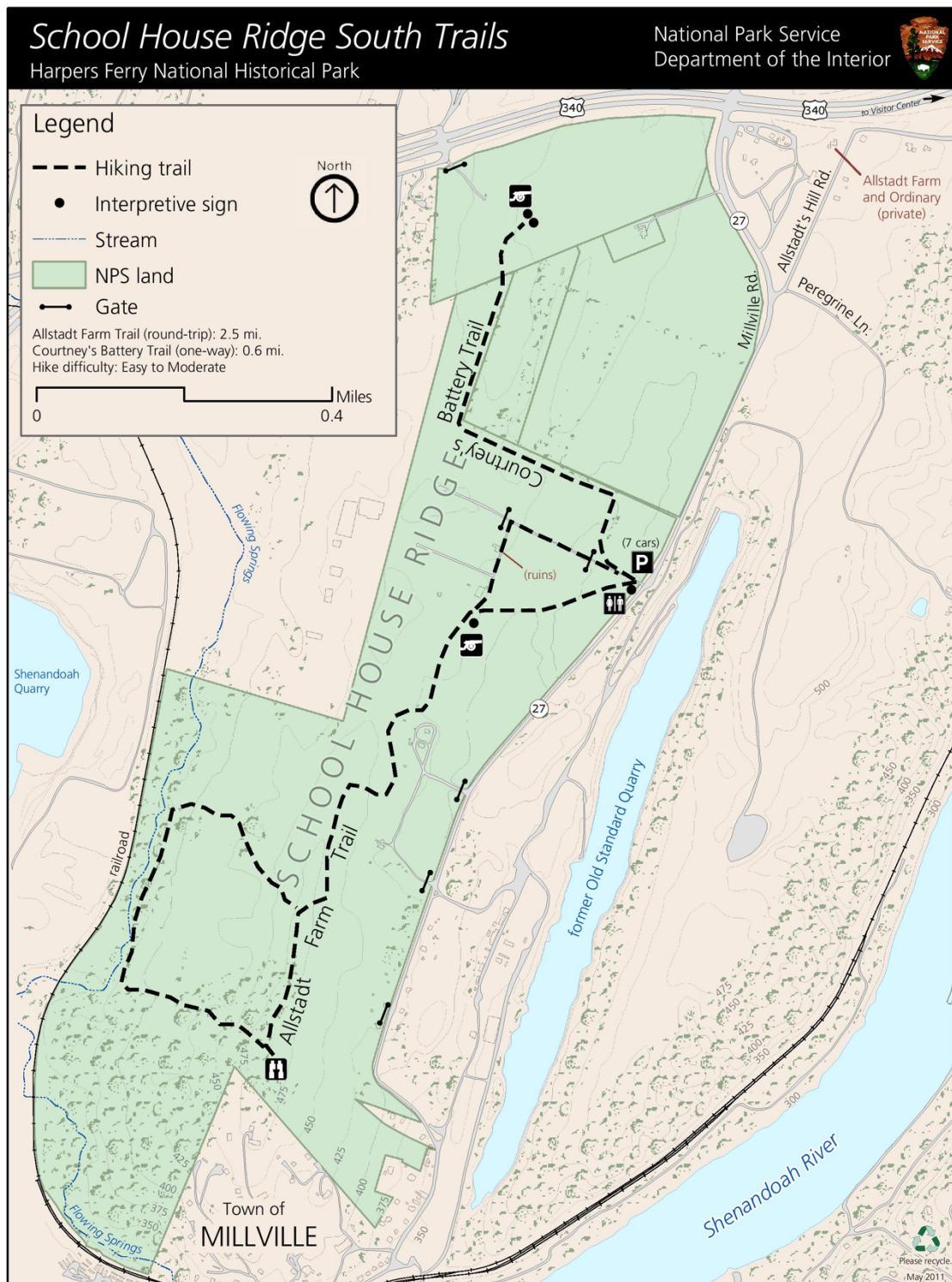
The Millville plant employed between fifty and seventy-five men when it first opened in 1900 and it came to have the largest number of employees of all the Standard Lime and Stone Company’s quarries; at its peak 636 people worked there, which represents more than half of all employees employed by the company (Chappel 1991:56).



Company housing was built near the plant and workers moved there with their families. High water and flooding occasionally interrupted the quarry's operations, but for the most part Standard Lime saw modest growth and largely continuous operation throughout the 1930s and especially the 1940s, when World War II increased the demand for the quarry's products. Millville lost many of its employees in the 1940s and 1950s when men enlisted to fight in World War II and the Korean War.

Upon leaving the service, many did not return to Millville but settled in other areas such as Charles Town (National Park Service 2005:29). The company reduced its activity in those years as production slowed down; the rock wool and dolomite enrichment operations were closed in 1949 and 1957, respectively, and in 1954 the Baker family sold the Standard Lime and Stone Company, consisting of nine plants and 1,600 employees, to the American-Marietta Company (later the Martin-Marietta Company) (*ibid.*).

In the ensuing years, Millville slowly deteriorated, though the quarry continued to operate. Between 1955 and 1971, eight houses and the town's Catholic Church were removed. American-Marietta refused to sell land to its tenants, but allowed them to purchase the house they were renting for \$300 if they removed it from company land (*ibid.*). The quarry had ceased operations by 1974, and in 1981 Martin-Marietta sold its property west of Millville Road to Shenandoah Quarries, LLC, which was also operating another former Baker quarry, Blair Quarry (National Park Service 2005:57). The Sleepy Hollow Partnership sold the land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1991 for the construction of a training facility; the agency evicted the two remaining families and slated the remaining six houses for demolition (Griffith 2003:32). However, before any work was done, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service relocated the training facility to Shepherdstown and entered into a Cooperative Management Agreement with the National Historical Park in 2002. While USFWS maintains an administrative capacity of the property, Harpers Ferry NHP manages the land in accordance with the policies and regulations applicable to the National Park Service. Today, what remains of the industrial complex are one foreman's house and two workers' houses at the southern end of the property, as well as the remains of kilns, settling basins, and garages, workshops, outhouses, and other support buildings (National Park Service 2005:26) [see Figure 27].



**Figure 27. Map of National Park Service holdings around the former quarry site. Courtesy of National Park Service.**

## Millville Quarry Workers

The men who worked at Standard Lime and Stone often began as teenagers and remained for decades, unless they were forced to leave due to injury, military service, or old age. Working at Standard Lime and Stone was often a family affair, with multiple generations of men working together and passing down jobs, skills, and institutional knowledge. Guy Chicchirichi, who lived in Millville all his life, recalled during our interview how he came to work at Standard Lime and Stone:

Went to Harpers Ferry high school and I wasn't, I wasn't too good, but I could play football and I could play baseball so that helped a little bit. So I went til 12th grade and then I worked down in the plant where my dad worked. He was the blacksmith at the plant. They would let us go on close to graduating, couple years back they'd let you come to work, get used to the plant, and then when you graduated they'd give you a job, so I got my first job down there about 1938, something like that, summertime. '37 or '38. I'd go down, but they never would let me work in the shop with my dad. They always put me up in the plant someplace. I guess the idea was to get me familiar with the plant and everything. I didn't understand that but I think that was their idea, and then the last year they let me work for my dad.

But my dad was--used to take me, when I was 9, 10, 11 years old, the kids would--summertime, no school and too young to go to work--well, all the kids would get behind that little church we had there and play baseball. Well, I had to go to the shop with my dad for one hour a day and he set me up even when I was small--he set me up on a bench where he had his toolbox, he set me up on his toolbox. He says, "you just watch." So I had to do that every day in the summertime and that's where I learned most of my stuff and then as I got bigger, I could do stuff at the shop, so that was--I didn't think it was so good at the time but I realize now that it was really a good lesson, yeah, but he knew what he was doing. So I--in the 12th grade--I was in the 12th grade and I was taking a couple classes like history. I was taking two classes of history in the 12th grade so--and I had worked at the company that summer so when I worked down there that summer I thought, "I'm not going back to school," so I went down and asked the boss if he'd give me my job back and he said 'what's your trouble?' I said 'well, I can't play football anymore and I think I would rather go to work,' so he picks the phone up and calls the principal at the school and I said, "well, I think I'm in pretty good shape 'cause I don't think [the principal] wants to see me anymore" [laughs]. ... And so he hung the phone up and he said "well, don't look like they want you down there anyway" [laughs] and so, he used his head a little bit, made me suffer a little bit. He said 'you come back and see me in about a week.' So that's the way I got my job back. ... So when I went back to work the second time, well, I went in the plant, doing the labor job in the plant and finally it was an operating job came up and I got that--it was to mix the lime and make slurry out of it, then they'd pump that into a big reservoir and then they'd filter that and then they'd burn it in a rotary kiln.

We also interviewed James "Dixie" Wiltshire, another lifelong resident of Millville and a former quarry employee, who recalled that many of the men in his family worked for Standard Lime and Stone:

Dixie Wiltshire: Well, the reason I'm here is because of my great-grandparents. My dad worked at what they called the quarry here. ... My dad I guess was born and raised over on the mountain, what they call Chestnut Hill--over that mountain, and he started working, his dad worked there, he worked there, my uncle worked there, uncles and cousins, then my two older brothers went to work there, I worked there, five and a half years.

Megan Bailey: So, did you and the other men in your family who worked at the quarry, were you all doing the same type of job, or what exactly did you do?

[...]

DW: No.

MB: What kinds of things were you--?

DW: Me, I said, these hands are not made for a shovel. So I was in the--maintenance clerk. What I did was every piece of equipment on that plant was in the card file, a big cart like this, and when the men went to work on that piece of equipment that day, they would report back how many hours they worked on it and what they used on it so then they could go back like, "now this here is March," so they came in the maintenance office and they could say, "I want to see the card on that kiln, Number Three kiln" so you get the card, pull the card and give it to them, they could tell you how many hours they spent on that kiln and how many hours they spent on that kiln and labor and the parts.

MB: Okay.

DW: And tell you really how expensive it is; it was really, really something.

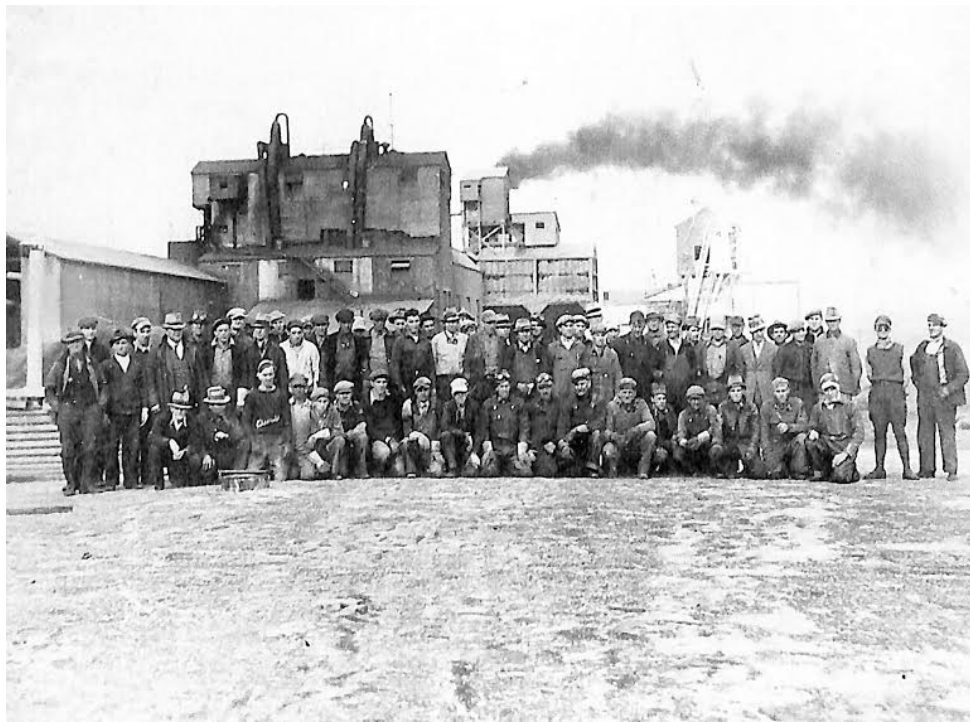
MB: Yeah, and what did your dad and your uncle, what did they do?

DW: Dad did everything, everything from all the way up. He worked in the quarries on the thing and the last, I'd say, 20 years, he was the kiln burner, he worked on that big long kiln, 20... yeah. He did that, which was the second highest paying job.

Quarry work could be physically demanding, tedious, and dangerous, given that people were working at great heights and with heavy machinery. Accidents frequently occurred and several Standard Lime employees in Millville were crippled or even killed in the course of their career (Griffith 2003:23). Reports by the Standard Lime and Stone Accident Roundtable, a safety task force that met throughout the mid-twentieth century, give a few examples of incidents that occurred at Millville: one man was struck by the door of a hammer crusher, another was injured loading stone into a truck, another was injured digging a ditch from the quarry bank to the railroad track, one fell to the ground running from a rolling stone and sprained his ankle, one was struck on the side of his head by a flying piece of wood shim, one broke his toe when it was struck by stone falling from a truck, one was knocked to the ground from a container car by an electrical shock and dislocated his shoulder, and one received flash burns to both eyes from welding equipment (Standard Lime and Stone Company). Dixie Wiltshire recalled seeing this kind of injury first-hand, during his father's long tenure at the quarry:

'Course, he'd been there a long time too, but Dad worked on that kiln and I used to get on him because lot of times the kiln, the brick inside would fall and drop. Well, that might be a 6, 7, 8, 9 feet drop, and when that thing turned it would drop. Well then, Daddy got so he'd be in there, he was 65, 66, and he'd be doing that, and a day like today it'd be cold, windy, coal and heat come out of that thing, wet and... he sat there like that. I used to get on him and say, "quit," I said, "you don't need it." 'Course he was in the union. And Daddy was the oldest and he got so he'd, they'd ask him back, "How 'bout it?", and he'd say "no, no more, no," and that's the same way, my Dad did that, and his uncle was bad and crippled, my uncle Luther. He got hit by a cart, it put his leg back like this. Well, back then, you know, that was it. So, and Daddy was crippled. Daddy got hit on the shins by some dinky cart in the quarry, and they gave him quinine every night. He'd take that quinine, dip it in that thing and rub it on that shin, and he ended up getting a short leg.

The Bakers took a variety of measures in the mid-twentieth century to create a culture of safety and minimize the risks and injuries experienced by their employees. Each plant had a safety committee or council to encourage safe work practices and keep track of how many days they went without injury. In the 1950s, representatives of each Standard Lime and Stone plant came together once a month for the Accident Roundtable where they reported on the injuries (or lack thereof) at their respective sites and discussed how to train supervisors and employees in safety measures. The Bakers also hosted safety rallies and No-Accident Campaigns, and gave out awards to departments or plants that went an entire year without "lost time



**Figure 28. Foremen of Millville's quarry, c. late 1930s. Courtesy of James Wiltshire.**

accidents.” Beginning in the 1930s the nearby Bakerton plant published the Bakerton Safety News, a monthly newsletter with the motto “Think and Act Safely Always” provided safety tips, introductions to new employees and bosses, a gossip corner, and information about church and social events.

While the work may have been dangerous, unpleasant, or monotonous, the employees were a close-knit group who looked out for each other and sometimes enjoyed a playful relationship [see Figure 28]. Dixie Wiltshire remembered his co-workers fondly:

Dixie Wiltshire: But they were good guys, gave me a rough time but I didn't mind 'em.

Megan Bailey: Yeah.

DW: They were all older, lot older like my dad, been around a long time but...

MB: Yeah.

DW: We got along great. Good bunch of guys. Some of 'em couldn't even write their name. When I was in maintenance, they come in, they want something for--piece of equipment--they came through me. They come in saying “I need a bearing” “What kind you need?” “I need that so-and-so bearing,” I said “OK. What's that for?” “Number three so-and-so.” I said, “OK, sign your name.” “You know I can't write.” I said, “well, put your initials,” and they put their initials, I put their name down. And they go over and take a piece of equipment, turn it around, put it back together, but they couldn't write their name. Good bunch of guys though, really....I had a good time with 'em, I loved 'em all. Not too many left, very, very few of 'em are left.

Standard Lime and Stone's Millville employees became a tightly-knit community not only because they worked together, but also because they lived in close proximity and attended the same churches, schools, and grocery stores built by the company. The early housing provided to workers at the turn of the twentieth century was subpar: two-room shanties with leaking roofs, rotten floors, and loose windows and doors (Griffith 2003:25-6). By 1914, there were eleven houses; an influx of employees in the ensuing years led

Standard Lime and Stone to construct a total of twenty-three company houses two churches near the plant by 1920 (National Park Service 2005:22). The houses were identical to those erected near Standard Lime and Stone's Bakerton quarry nearby, and likely were designed and built by the same men, Preston S. Millard and C.D. Carter (Griffith 2003:26). The houses were constructed on the east side of Bloomery Road and were usually two-story frame houses with three rooms on the first floor, two rooms on the second, and a dirt cellar below (ibid.) [see Figure



**Figure 29. Worker's house with additions constructed on the back, 1991. HAER photo. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

29]. Houses were sometimes occupied by larger families of ten to twelve people, and it was reported to be common for family members to share a bed (ibid.). Though these houses were somewhat of an improvement over the early dwellings, they were not very comfortable; Dixie Wiltshire quipped of the houses that, "We always said they were split level. You see through the splits and there's someone there." The houses were heated by a small coal or wood cookstove, lacked insulation, and had just one indoor spigot or no plumbing at all; outdoor privies were used and water had to be hauled from a well for washing and bathing (Wiltshire 1998:59). Standard Lime employees and their families could occasionally use the plant's bathroom to bathe, but more often bathed in the plant reservoir when the temperature was warmer (ibid.). Though residents didn't have much control over the architecture of their house, they could request paint, wallpaper, and materials to decorate the house and construct outbuildings such as garages, smoke houses, chicken coops, and pig pens (Griffith 2003:26). Guy Chicchirichi described his house with these improvements as he remembered it:

It's a two-story house, it was German siding on it, but they plaster it like, and two stories, two bedrooms upstairs, and one bedroom downstairs and the dining room and kitchen, and my dad made the kitchen, had the back porch tied onto the kitchen. He made the whole back porch for kitchen because the family was so big.

Mike Jenkins, whose father was born in a company house in 1926, described to us what he was told about growing up in that environment:

'Course my dad often talked about his childhood, about how those company houses had no insulation. They were basically on the second floor, let's say six kids all in one bed 'cause essentially there were only two rooms in the house so the parents had one, the kids had the other. Company would occasionally provide like a whitewash of some sort to, you know, paint your house at some time or another.

Over time, the combination of increased wages and improvements to the houses led Standard Lime and Company raise rent in the mid-twentieth century. In our interview with Dixie Wiltshire he recalled this price increase:

Dixie Wiltshire: They'd charge \$5 a month rent or \$10, \$15 but the last time my mom and daddy was there they paid \$15 a month rent.

Megan Bailey: Wow.

Dixie Wiltshire: And I was born in the one with \$5.

While workers and foremen lived together along the same road, the foremen tended to live in more substantial brick houses with indoor bathrooms (Wiltshire 1998:76). In the 1940s, the workers' wooden-sided houses were covered with stucco to keep out the cold and the dust that constantly emanated from the quarry; some workers also added indoor bathrooms (Wiltshire 1998:26).

In the 1950s, the widespread availability of automobiles and telephones meant that workers did not need to live on the plant's campus, so employees moved farther away from the work site and company housing began to fall into disrepair from lack of use (National Park Service 2005:26). Later, employees were given the option of purchasing their houses if they removed them from the property. Mike Jenkins says of his father, "One of his other stories is--I don't know if they were still there in Millville at the time, the house got sold so they kinda put it on a flatbed and they were pulling it across the field and it fell off the wagon and basically disintegrated. That's why the Jenkins house is no longer in Millville." Company housing continued to decline throughout the 1960s and 1970s as quarrying operations slowed down and the Standard Lime and Stone Company was sold to American-Marietta.

Due to the uniformity of quarry workers' environment and routine – they performed the same work, were paid the same amount, and lived in identical houses in the same neighborhood—they developed their own unique culture and community born out of shared experience (National Park Service 2005:29). In addition, the fact that the quarry workers were not particularly wealthy—and indeed were all quite poor by today's standards—also fostered a sense of community and interdependency. Dixie Wiltshire made this point during our interview with him, calling Millville a "good town to grow up in, but like I said it's rough times, very rough, very hard times, you just, nobody had any money," later adding that, "That was a good livin'. Everybody stayed together, somebody got in trouble, everybody was there, very close-knit. I don't know what else to tell you. Like I said, if somebody got in trouble, everybody was there. 'What do you need, can I help you?' you know."

The residents of Millville did not have much in the way of material wealth, but their basic needs were met. The Bakers provided necessities and funded the construction of institutions such as churches. Frances Millard, a resident of one of the Bakers' other company towns, Bakerton, recalled that, "They were pretty generous with their money. However, if they thought you could make it on your own, you did it. But if you needed help, they were there" (Theriault 2009:187). Millville residents had two grocery stores, one run by the company from 1910-1930 that was then sold to Jessie Hoffmaster, who also ran the post office, and one run by Enrico and Irene Rinaldi (National Park Service 2005:2). Quarry employees tended to have cash only on payday, so both stores allowed residents to purchase items on credit and settle their accounts at the end of the week (Porter 2011:116). Millville also had an elementary school and a post office that also served as a community meeting place for senior residents (ibid.) [see Figure 30].





**Figure 30. Millville grade school, which James “Dixie” Wiltshire jokingly called MIT: “Millville Institute of Technology, c. 1938. Courtesy of James Wiltshire.**

Though the Bakers were known to frown upon drinking and gambling, they did not interfere with these activities. George Dozier, a quarry employee and resident of Bakerton, recalled that the Bakers, “put up a big kick about it one time, but it didn't go through.... They couldn't do nothing about it. It wasn't on company property.... We used to have a big time out there in Bakerton. They used to sell beer in a quart can called Eslingers. And that was all the kind of beer they would drink. The people would come out of there with it underneath their arm. If they didn't want people to see them, they'd go around, say like through this woods” (Theriault 2009:187). Millville had a beer hall, and drinking and card playing were common leisure activities among quarry workers.

A popular weekend activity for those who had means of transportation was to visit Charles Town. During our interview, Guy Chicchirichi recalled that, “Everyone went to town on Saturday night,” and went on to say:

We had an old lady, she had a boardinghouse. People came in and didn't have no place to stay, she boarded rooms and they worked at the plant. Well, she liked to go to town on Saturdays and when we get our license we'd take turns driving her to town so that was a way to get to town on Saturday night [*laughs*].

Baseball was another popular activity in Millville, and the Bakers installed a field along the west side of Bloomery Road next to one of the foremen's houses where children and men played baseball, softball, football, and other games (National Park Service 2005:27). Many of the quarries in the area had their own baseball teams, and Standard Lime was no exception. The company furnished the players with uniforms, and fierce competitions took place with other teams from Havre de Grace, Keystone, and Blair (Theriault



2009:188). Competition in the Bi-County Industrial League was fierce. Baseball became enormously popular and was so important to the quarry that the company would hire talented players and provide them with a relatively easy job at the quarry in exchange for their participation on the baseball team (Griffith 2003:30). If the Millville team won a tournament, Standard Lime would award a cash bonus to the participating employees (ibid.). The baseball games continued until they were disrupted by World War II, which drew many men away from the quarry.

Millville residents displayed a kind of self-sufficiency that was part and parcel of what Dixie Wiltshire described as “country life”:

Most all the time it was about the same, there were company-owned employees, the women usually stayed with the housework, took care of the family, the kids and everything, and anything else I don't know. It was just country life is all I can tell you. We had chickens, we had hogs, we had a cow, we had a garden, and that's, 90% of the people did that. That's what they had.

Residents of Millville tended to make or produce whatever they needed; Guy Chicchirichi recalled that his mother made clothes for herself and her daughters out of feed sacks. Many residents had gardens where they grew peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, string beans, cantaloupes, herbs, and spices (National Park Service 2005:16). Reportedly one house had an especially extensive garden with fruit trees and grape arbors (ibid.). Canning and butchering were common; residents picked fruit from the nearby orchards for jams and jellies, and also raised hogs, chickens, or cows (Griffith 2003:29). The hills to the east of Millville served as grazing pasture for their cattle (National Park Service 2005:27). Mike Jenkins shared during our interview that his father had told him about local residents' methods of keeping livestock:

[He] always talked about how they'd have a pig, and so what they'd do is they'd just take this pig in the springtime and they'd turn him loose and he would just go wherever he went, and again this was--everybody in Millville did this, but everybody knew whose pig was who, and they would just forage out, like free range, you know, and then when it came butchering time then they would go out and round up these pigs and bring 'em—so it never sounded like they actually fed them. They let them forage for the season and then when it came butchering time, like I said, they would just go out and herd 'em up. How do you know where this hog went? But apparently it was just not an issue. Wouldn't do it today--somebody'd hit it on a road but I always found it kinda--Well, I'm like “you didn't have a hog pen or anything like that?” And he's like “no, you just kinda, the hog would just go out and kinda roam around.”

Research and a survey of interviews and oral histories reveal themes of interdependency, self-sufficiency, and resilience among quarry workers and their families. While Millville's residents did not enjoy the material comforts of their wealthier counterparts in nearby Harpers Ferry, they fostered the skills and interpersonal relationships to ensure that they could “make do” with whatever they had.

## Italian Community

Standard Lime and Stone was notable for recruiting a large number of Italian immigrants to serve their quarrying operations. The homogenous nature of the Millville community and environment mean that immigrant employees assimilated to a certain degree; however, they also maintained their own heritage, culture, and shared identity apart from American culture that surrounded them.

More than four million Italians came to the United States between 1890 and 1920, approximately eighty percent of whom were from Southern Italy (Puleo 1994:1). Most of the men in Southern Italy worked as peasant farmers, fishermen, shoemakers, barbers, craftsmen, or tradesmen, and were experiencing a series of events that kept them in poverty (Puleo 1994:21). Crops were affected by disease, there were widespread food shortages due to poor harvests, a series of earthquakes killed 30,000 in 1905 and over 120,000 in 1908, Mount Vesuvius erupted and devastated entire towns near Naples in 1906, and malaria broke out across the country (Puleo 1994:22). In addition, the government levied crushing taxes on its residents, with the largest burden falling on those who could least afford to pay them. In order to escape the job shortages, poverty, and natural disasters in Italy, Italians came to America in droves. Most immigrants were illiterate and lacked skills that could be transferred from the rural agricultural economy of Southern Italy to the urban centers of the United States, thus they arrived largely unprepared for life in America (Puleo 1994:29). Standard Lime took advantage of their vulnerable position and actively recruited Italian immigrants in large port cities on the East Coast such as New York City and Philadelphia. Because Italian immigrants were poor, desperate for work, or lacking in education and resources to get a better job, they were willing to perform the more dangerous labor of loading, crushing, and blasting of stone (Griffith 2003:23). Standard Lime could exploit their disadvantaged position and pay them just two-thirds of what other white employees earned, thereby saving on labor costs (Porter 2011:76). However, as the number of Italian employees increased, they eventually reached a critical mass and were able to leverage their numbers to increase their wages and renegotiate the terms of their contracts (*ibid.*), which often stipulated that they must serve the quarry for a certain amount of time, and/or they were required to repay transportation costs to the company (National Park Service 2005:21).

When Standard Lime and Stone opened its Millville quarry in 1900, it employed 32 Italians. Though over half the men were married, they had not brought their wives and families with them (*ibid.*). Guy Chicchirichi's father was one such example. Born in the 1880s in Mosciano, Citta St. Angelo in Italy, Orazio Chicchirichi came to the United States in 1909 where he worked in Philadelphia and Havre de Grace before being hired and brought to Millville by Standard Lime in 1910. A skilled blacksmith, he was able to save enough money to return to Italy in 1914 and retrieve his wife, Maria DiGiacomo; in 1928 he brought his 75-year-old father, Antonio, to the United States (Chicchirichi 1997:307). Guy Chicchirichi recalled that his grandfather "loved it over here because we all treated him right."

By 1910, Standard Lime had added at least eighteen Italian employees to their payroll (Griffith 2003:23), partly through their own recruitment efforts but also because current employees contacted friends and relatives in their native land to tell them about job opportunities (National Park Service 2005:21). Standard Lime lost many of its employees during World War I, when Italians felt compelled to return to Italy and fight on behalf of their nation of origin (Porter 2011:71). Consequently, Standard Lime had a severe labor shortage and found it difficult to find immigrant laborers in the usual port cities (Porter 2011:77). While the number of Italian employees declined, the number of Italians in Millville rose, as most employees lived with their families by 1920 (National Park Service 2005:21). World War II also saw a decline in Standard Lime's workforce as many men served in the military. Guy Chicchirichi's father and brother both served in the merchant marines in 1942.

The motivation to construct additional worker housing came from this influx of Italian laborers; a 1910 issue of the *Farmers Advocate* observed that, “There are numerous comfortable homes on the hill slope erected for the domicile of the better element of Italians who desire to live with their families and there are also several new offices. These buildings appear to be disposed with a view of the settlement some day developing into a town of regularly laid streets.” Though not exclusively occupied by Italians, Standard Hill came to be known as the “Italian Village” or “Little Italy.” Italian immigrants formed an enclave in Millville bound together by shared heritage and nationality and a need for protection, stability, and familiarity in a foreign and sometimes hostile environment. Millville was relatively removed from the communities of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, and though it was growing, it still remained small and isolated from the development of the nearby towns (Chicchirichi 1998). Few Italian immigrants could read or write or speak English, further restricting their participation in civil society. They were alienated by their American neighbors on the basis of their ethnic difference and were often the target of harassment by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan would invade Millville and burn crosses in the Italian neighborhood, yell slurs at the residents, and threaten to set fire to their houses (ibid.).

The Italian community also came into frequent conflict with African American laborers. In 1893, following a conflict between an African American railroad worker and an Italian, a gang of Italians pursued the African American until two men intervened, claiming that the “infuriated foreigners” would have most likely killed the man without their interference (Porter 2011:65). On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1912, what became known as the “Mini Race War” erupted between Italian and African American laborers in a saloon in Harpers Ferry. A violent drunken brawl between the two groups reportedly went on for nearly two hours and resulted in the death of an Italian quarry worker, Page Belardino and an African American railroad employee named “Braxton,” both of whom were fatally stabbed (Porter 2011:98). Another African American resident, “Goose” Jackson, was stabbed in the stomach outside of the saloon and managed to get inside the establishment where he was given a gun and reportedly shot several Italians (ibid.). Another incident occurred on July 4, 1916, when, in the early hours of the morning, a group of African Americans allegedly broke into the house of Francisco Diaddezio, who lived there with his son and two other Italians. Diaddezio woke up and was immediately shot and killed, while the others feigned sleep to protect themselves. The fact that this occurred exactly four years after the Mini Race War suggested to some that the incident was an act of revenge, though the perpetrators were never caught (ibid.). White residents viewed these incidents as almost inevitable and attributed them to the ethnic makeup and inherently incompatible characteristics of Italians and African Americans. In a 1986 interview with William Theriault, Charles Knott, who grew up in company housing in Bakerton, explained these racial conflicts as such:

And over on Ten Row [a line of 10 company houses located northwest of the original quarry] they had a bunch of colored, and on down this way, most of these over here was sort of like little houses, and they had their wives and kids. Once in a while one of them would get in there and mix in with Little Italy. That was mostly Italians. And when the Italians and the colored get together you always had a little trouble. They were just that different from one another (Theriault 2009:416).

Thanks to this discrimination, isolation, and poor living conditions, life was often difficult and uncomfortable for Italian families in Millville. However, in the 1920s and beyond, Italians formed a cohesive community that provided for their needs. Families grew what they needed in order to maintain their

traditional diet: gardens with peppers, tomatoes, and Italian herbs, and vineyards to produce wine, which was a common and important part of life that Italians retained in spite of Prohibition laws that rigidly controlled the manufacture and consumption of alcohol at the time (Griffith 2003:23). They also raised livestock such as pigs, chickens, and cows. Guy Chicchirichi explained during our interview how Millville's Italian residents displayed both self-sufficiency and interdependence in their attempt to provide for their needs:

And we were raised on chickens, raised on hogs, and everybody--all the neighbors--raised about the same thing but some of them had cows so we would trade milk for butter. I mean, we would trade eggs for butter, just exchanged back and forth and everybody got along fine. It was during the Depression, 1929 and all that, but we didn't know it was the Depression.

Hunting and fishing were also common means of supplementing residents' other food sources; Chicchirichi described how fishing in the nearby river was part of his family's daily life [see Figure 31]:

Guy Chicchirichi: Oh! Shenandoah. Shenandoah River. I guess we was about... take the shortcut, maybe half a mile, three-quarters of a mile, half a mile, so we always--I don't know if you know what an outline is or not, but an outline is a cord, a string, it's pretty--it's not very big but it's still stout and you anchor it at the bank and then you go across the river with it, and then you put an anchor on it and put another string on it so you could tell where the end is, and every so often you'd have a string with a hook on it so you get down there in the morning--about 5 o'clock in the morning--and you run that outline and you pick the line up and take your boat, go from one hook to the other, put the fish in the bag, keep on going, so we caught a lot of fish. So we lived mostly on the river, my daddy and I. He liked to hunt, loved the hunting.

Megan Bailey: What did he hunt, deer or--what animals did he hunt?

GC: We never hunted deer; we hunted rabbits. Squirrels and rabbits, but never did go deer hunting, he never hunted deer but he could make anything, so he made a lot of butcher knives and I--in fact, I got one in that drawer. And he knew all the farmers, because if he didn't, he'd go up to the door, knock on the door, he'd want to know if the gentleman was there and if she said 'no, he's up in the barn,' so he'd go out in the barn, he--and I'd be with him--and he had a hunting coat on, a place in the back to put your rabbits and stuff, and he'd reach back in the pocket and gave this farmer a butchering knife that he had made so he was one step ahead of 'em [laughs] and he said 'I know you don't like any hunting but we're pretty careful, we don't shoot any cattle or anything and we'd appreciate if you'd let us hunt.' Well, what was the man gonna say? He'd done gave him a butcher knife [laughs].

MB: Right [laughs].

GC: So he said yes, so we'd go hunting. That's the way he got in with people to hunt on their land, so that's one instance that we did, and we'd go to the river every morning about five o'clock and run those outlines; we'd run them two times a day--in the morning, in the evening--so we practically lived on the river.

Residents could procure nearly everything they needed from within their own community; Millville had its



**Figure 31. Guy Chicchirichi's father and brother pose with fish they caught in the Shenandoah River, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Guy Chicchirichi.**

own stores, post office, baseball team, and railroad depot. The Capriotti family opened a restaurant in the “Little Italy” neighborhood of nearby Bakerton, and was well known for their spaghetti sauce, which they would make in big pots and sell in Shepherdstown (Theriault 2009: 178).

Millville also had its own elementary school. Chicchirichi recalled attending “an old wooden school” in Millville, though he had to attend high school in Harpers Ferry. His mother was illiterate, like many Italian residents of Millville but she “got an education while her kids got an education”, as he told us in an interview: And then when my first--her first child was a girl--when she got old enough to go to school, well, when she come home with her books and everything, my mother learned just like she did and they did that every year and she got pretty smart so you couldn't fool her too much [*laughs*].

Chicchirichi also reported that his mother learned English from Irene Rinaldi, an Italian woman who ran one of Millville’s grocery stores with her husband.

Eventually, Italians in Millville had their own church as well. In the early twentieth century, Millville had Methodist, Episcopal, and Pentecostal services, but did not serve the Catholic Italian population, who had to travel to St. Peter’s Catholic Church, located two miles away in Harpers Ferry (Griffith 2003:30) [see



**Figure 32. St. Peter’s Church, 2013.**  
Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

Figure 32]. Religion was an important connection to the immigrants’ homeland and heritage, so having their own church was necessary to maintain their cultural practices. In 1923, St. Michael’s Catholic Church was erected in Millville, and a priest and nuns from St. Peter’s Church presided over their services (National Park Service 2005:24). Guy Chicchirichi recalled how members of a nearby Catholic camp also provided services in the summer:

Guy Chicchirichi: That's the little church we had: St. Michael's. I don't know, I think it's--yeah, yeah, St. Michael's. And we all went to Sunday school there and we had a lady from Charles Town. Her name is--her husband's name is Jenkins, but she went by the name of Marianne, and she was pretty strict. And so, she would come down on Sundays if we had Sunday school but during the day, during the week in the summertime on the Potomac River, which is north of Harpers Ferry in Bolivar. There's the Potomac River and Shenandoah comes together, maybe you come across the bridge down there.

Megan Bailey: Uh-huh.

GC: Anyway--I forgot what I was gonna say. The brothers had--the diocese had a piece of ground down on that river. And they called 'em brothers. You know, before they're priests. Well, the brothers would come there and spend the summer there. And they had a ball team and they'd come to Millville and teach us and then they go to Charles Town and they kept busy all the time and they had a real nice camp down there and they'd take us to the camp once or two times in summertime. Had a great time. Those men do anything. So those brothers would come over and teach us Sunday School and my sister, my two sisters, they did, they always did it in church--both of them passed away now, but--even in church they'd get to laughing and the priest got a kick out of them, sure. So they make one of them leave. So she would crawl underneath the church because she know and take a stone or something and [*laughs*]. So that's some of the foolish stuff we did. So that's where we went to Sunday school until we were--got big enough to go to church, which we went to church when we were little too.

As Italian immigrants became more established in Millville, they became increasingly integrated into the surrounding communities. According to the Census, ten marriages took place between Italian-born men

and white West Virginian women in 1930 (Porter 2011:116). Families tended to occupy the same houses from the mid-1920s into the 1950s and sometimes beyond, lending a sense of stability and generational continuity to the community. Still, Italian residents of Millville maintained strong ties to their native land. Guy Chicchirichi recalled that written correspondence was a common way of keeping in touch with family in Italy, saying, “We never missed the mail, I can tell you that!” He remembered that the mail was delivered to Millville at seven o’clock in the evening, and his father and two of his Italian friends would go to fetch it together. Because many of the quarry workers were illiterate, his mother would take dictation and write letters for them:

Lot of 'em didn't go back [to Italy] and they'd get letters from over there, and they'd bring the letters up to my mother. So she'd read 'em, and then he would tell 'em what to write and send it back to them. But she wouldn't put all that stuff in there... didn't want to do it—they didn't know it, she wouldn't put it in there but she would write the letters for 'em.

Chicchirichi and his wife had the opportunity to visit Italy in the 1970s when they won a travel contest. During their trip, they visited his father’s former home, which was still owned by the family:

He was planning on staying over there. It's a good thing he didn't. ... He built a blacksmith shop and he was planning on staying. And the old blacksmith's shop had fallen down but the house was still there and my cousins, the people who lived in it, they had an upstairs to it that my dad had put the house up, 'cause they lived there while he was there, and had a little balcony on it. And my mother was telling me in the wintertime she could stand on that balcony and see the Adriatic Sea. And now it's a big resort. My brother's been over a couple of times. He says, “you wouldn't believe it, it's a big resort.” So that was something.

As members of the Italian community gained more financial stability, they began to move out of Millville and to the surrounding towns. Guy Chicchirichi’s father was able to purchase a car and a more comfortable house in Millville for his wife and nine children by 1930 (Chicchirichi 1998:307). They moved from Millville to Charles Town in 1954. Though the community lost some of its geographic cohesion, the cultural and kinship ties remained. Mike Jenkins observed during our interview that many of the family names common to quarry workers—Chicchirichi, Capriotti, D’Angelo—are still common in the Harpers Ferry area. The town began to further depopulate after 1954 when Standard Lime sold the quarry to American-Marietta, who began closing nearby plants. Bakerton closed in 1957, and many of the skilled workers and foremen sought work at Millville while unskilled laborers were forced to look for jobs further afield or participate in another industry such as farming (Theriault 2009:406). Lowell Hetzel, a former Bakerton employee, noted that it was difficult for men to find new jobs because the average age of employees was fairly high (202). The Millville plant didn’t last much longer; operations ceased in the 1970s. Without employment, quarry workers were forced to look for work in Harpers Ferry, Charles Town, and further afield, thus pulling more people away from Millville. Additionally, while Millville’s cohesive community had long been supported by generations of family ties and the public services provided by the Baker family, once the quarry was operated by a major corporation and then closed altogether, local residents lost many of the services they had come to rely upon. Consequently, a number of Italian families left Millville. Guy Chicchirichi lamented the loss of the Millville he was used to, saying in our interview:

Oh, it’s changed a lot but the old town is still there. The biggest change is the population. All around the town and all over the county it drove up so bad. Not used to that. I liked the old town the best. But you can’t stop progress.



## Traditional Associations

Today, much of the land that former quarry workers would associate with Millville, their community, and their past is owned by the National Park Service [see Figure 33]. The area east of Bloomery Road (present-day Route 27) where the refractory, rock wool, and magnesium oxide plants were located and the workers' residences on the west side of the road are both on land once belonging to the Allstadts, and that property is now designated, identified, and interpreted by the park as part of Schoolhouse Ridge and Allstadt Farm. Today, Millville still exists just south of the park boundary and has an active post office and Methodist and Pentecostal churches, though the community is much smaller now. Residents of Millville hold an annual reunion to celebrate the town and their shared history and community, a tradition that continued into the early twenty-first century (Griffith 2003:29). Both Dixie Wiltshire and Guy Chicchirichi maintained relationships with other former quarry workers and socialized with them regularly.



**Figure 33. Ruins of Standard Lime & Stone Quarry lime kilns in Millville, sometime after 1968. HAER photograph. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

Wiltshire and Chicchirichi also share a deep connection to the landscape of Millville; during our interviews both were able to recite from memory which family had occupied each house in the company town, and Wiltshire offered to provide a tour of Standard Hill to point out where all the buildings and housing had been located.<sup>1</sup> Though life in Millville was often difficult for quarry workers, former residents have fond memories of living and working there. It is clear that in spite of the many changes that have affected Millville's

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, he passed away in June 2015 at the age of 85.

appearance and community, those who grew up there maintain strong attachments to the town and those who lived there.

## Representatives of the Tourism Industry

In addition to industry and farming, tourism service is one of the longest enduring occupations in the region. Today, following the decline of the former two occupations, Harpers Ferry is a largely residential and resort town. Thanks to its historical significance, natural beauty, and the availability of recreational activities, Harpers Ferry has always been particularly suited to drawing tourists. As Shackel and Moyer point out, the town has all the factors to draw a wide variety of visitors:

dramatic scenery at the convergence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers, historic associations ranging from George Washington to John Brown, a strategic location at the hypothetical intersection of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and a planned Appalachian parkway, and historical and geographic links to other proposed attractions including Antietam and Gettysburg battlefields (Moyer and Shackel 2008:26).



**Figure 34. View of the Potomac River, 2015. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

Thomas Jefferson visited Harpers Ferry in 1783 to explore the area's natural resources and was impressed by the scenic beauty of the region. He stood upon a rock (now known as Jefferson Rock) above the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers [see Figure 34] and remarked that the view was "perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in Nature" (O'Donnell et al. 2009:36). Of this experience, he wrote:

You stand on a very high point of land; on your right comes up the Shenandoah, having ranged along the foot of the mountains a hundred miles to find a vent; on your left approaches the Potomac, in quest of a passage also. In the moment of their junction they rush together against the mountain, rend it asunder, and pass off to the sea. The scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic" (Campbell and Sherman 2014:37).

Those who visited Harpers Ferry tend to describe it as Jefferson did, in grand, hyperbolic language. A brochure for Harpers Ferry produced by the B&O Railroad described the region as "one of Nature's master creations," a place that "teems with the activity of a large summer colony" where one can participate in hiking,



fishing, hunting, boating, motoring, sports, or simply resting, as the “invigorating climate will restore tired minds and bodies to a healthy condition” (B&O Railroad). A Visitor Study conducted by the park in 2005 showed that the park’s historical aspects, historical downtown, the river environment, natural beauty and scenery, and recreational opportunities were most highly rated by visitors (Meldrum et al.). Today, tourism is the number one industry in West Virginia, and one-third of Jefferson County’s residents work in the tourism and hospitality industry. With the establishment of the park, tourism has only become more popular in Harpers Ferry.

## A History of Tourism in Harpers Ferry and the Surrounding Area

Long before the park was even established, tourists were drawn to the Eastern Panhandle due to its natural resources. Berkeley Springs, located 45 miles northwest of Harpers Ferry, attracted Native Americans from as far as Canada and the Great Lakes region in the north to the Carolinas in the south (WV State Parks 2014). Settlers arriving in 1730 and beyond learned about the health benefits of the natural springs from Native Americans and encouraged others to visit. George Washington visited the springs at age sixteen during his time as part of a survey party in 1748. Washington was impressed by the curative powers of the springs and visited them regularly before eventually purchasing land in Berkeley Springs. Washington’s enthusiasm for the site helped further promote the springs and bring in more visitors, solidifying the town as a health spa. Once the town of Bath was founded there in 1776, five bathhouses and several other public buildings were constructed in order to solidify the springs as a health resort (WV State Parks 2014).

Closer to Harpers Ferry was a similar resort called Shannondale Springs. Located twelve miles upstream from Harpers Ferry on the bank of the Shenandoah River, the water from the springs was reported to have a mild laxative effect. A resort was constructed in 1820 with ten to twelve wood cottages followed by a two-story hotel to accommodate visitors to the spa. Following the Civil War, which stopped the resort’s operations until 1867, additional cottages were built, though the flood of 1870 caused considerable damage to them. A new hotel was constructed in 1890, and the town began selling water from the springs which was sold for one dollar per five-gallon bottle (National Register of Historic Places 1998).

The arrival of the railroad had an enormous impact on tourist activity in Harpers Ferry. With transportation faster and easier than ever, people were encouraged to travel more frequently and longer distances. The arrival of the B&O Railroad in Harpers Ferry encouraged tourism in the 1830s and 1840s [see Figure 35]. The railroad also supported new tourist and business ventures to serve the needs of visitors. Hotels sprang up near the railroad depot to accommodate the new influx of travelers. The White House, also known as the Virginia Hotel, made an arrangement with the B&O Railroad to be a stopover place for rail passengers. The hotel advertised in an 1842 issue of the *Virginia Free Press* that:

“...the new arrangement for the B&O Railroad will afford to travellers from the West, who remain over night, a few hours in the morning to visit the wild scenery which has become so noted throughout the country....There are two trains a day, East and West, and our little Branch Road, by way of Charlestown to Winchester, will convey the traveller through a region as fertile and fascinating as any the eye has ever seen, or the imagination can picture....The undersigned is gratified at being able to inform travelers, that the existing arrangements of the cars on the B&O Railroad, afford to those so disposed, an opportunity of avoiding night

travel on that road in going East. The Passenger Cars at present leave Hancock every evening about 7 o'clock, arrive Harper's Ferry about 9 o'clock, when the passengers take supper, and thence pass on to Baltimore. Another train of Cars leaves Harper's Ferry every morning about half-past 8 o'clock for the East—and thus persons going East in the night train can remain all night at Harpers Ferry, avoid the annoyances of night travel, and take the morning train for Baltimore, arriving there about 2 o'clock P.M. Those who may adopt this suggestion, will gain much by exchanging the dreariness of a ride at night, for the comforts and luxuries of that large and commodious WHITE HOUSE, known as the VIRGINIA HOTEL."



**Figure 35. View of the B&O Railroad station, looking west, 2002. Photograph by Jet Lowe. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

A November 1862 article in *Harper's Weekly* reporting on the military activity taking place around Harpers Ferry during the Civil War took the time to praise the beauty of the region. After describing how the army had occupied Maryland Heights, the article went on to note that

The view from the summit is a magnificent one. The Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, the Blue Ridge, the Bull Run Mountains, the Kittoctan Mountains, North and South Mountains, etc.—the towns of Winchester, Charlestown, Martinsburg, Hagerstown, Williamsport, Shepherdstown, and a number of others, are all overlooked by these heights, from which the lines of both armies are also visible. At night, through a powerful glass, the enemy's pickets are visible. But perhaps the most interesting scene is the view at sunrise, when the valleys are filled with joy—looking over the clouds tinged rosy-red by the sun, it seems as if a violent sea had been frozen into stillness at an instant, the mountains rising like islands from the heavy masses of vapor.

Following the Civil War, residents of Harpers Ferry could no longer rely on their previous economic base that had been provided by the now-destroyed armory and arsenal [see Figure 36]. With the realization that the armory wouldn't reopen, residents of Harpers Ferry turned to other industries, the most profitable of which was the resort trade. Though the town was in ruins following the war, this proved to be a selling point in the reconstruction era as commemorative tourism was becoming increasingly popular (Porter 2011:16). Curious visitors wished to see places where battles had been fought and fortifications and camps built. Perhaps because of its contrast to the natural beauty, destruction and decline were also an attraction; visitors came to see the Rifle Factory ruins along Shenandoah Street, though what they were actually viewing were the ruins of

an old flourmill, as the Rifle Factory ruins were buried under several feet of sediment (Poss and Moss 2010:125). Harpers Ferry was not prepared to accommodate this influx of tourists as residents and businesses were still in the processes of recovering from the war; in the late 1860s there was only one hotel in town, the Shenandoah Hotel, which was not particularly luxurious or comfortable



**Figure 36. Harpers Ferry immediately after the evacuation of Confederate troops, 1861. Photo by C. O. Bostwick. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

(Porter 2011:17). J.T. Trowbridge, an American author, toured much of the former Confederacy following the war, recording his observations and conversations with people, which he later published in his 1866 study titled *The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities*. He visited Harpers Ferry in the summer of 1865 and found it lacking in terms of accommodations and infrastructure due to the ravages of war, but upon viewing the town's natural

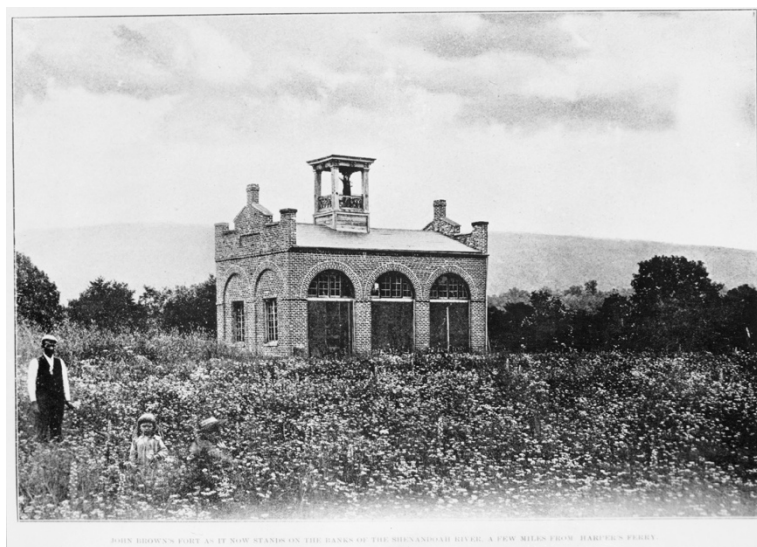
beauty he declared that it "could make a favorite resort area" (Moyer et al. 2004:35).

## Tourism Boom in the Late 1800s



**Figure 37. View of Harpers Ferry, 1865. Photo by Alexander Gardner. Courtesy of the National Archives.**

In the years following the war, Harpers Ferry continued to capitalize on the burgeoning tourist industry [see Figure 37]. As the country recovered from the Civil War and wealth increased, more people had disposable income and the ability to travel. In addition, the 1876 centennial of the country's independence encouraged people to visit sites of historical significance (National Park Service 2008:52). The town became a popular gathering place for those attracted by the beauty of the setting and curious to visit the scene of John Brown's raid. In fact, owing to the historical importance of the raid, visitors would collect items related to the event to save as souvenirs; tourists removed items from the armory and local boys sold the pikes that Brown and his followers had used during the raid (Lee 2011:78). When Thomas Savery purchased the armory grounds in 1884 he also acquired John Brown's Fort, which at that point was in disrepair but still a meaningful historic site. In 1891 the fort had been dismantled and removed from the Armory Grounds and transported to Chicago for the World Exposition. When he acquired the site, Savery made a practice of turning the fort's bricks into souvenirs, which he gifted to friends, relatives, and those who would appreciate their historical significance (Porter 2011:50). After the fort was moved to the Murphy Farm in 1894, B&O Railroad acquired a right-of-way through the old armory grounds and erected an obelisk over the fort's original foundation in 1895 [see Figure 38]. It was the first thing passengers saw as they entered Harpers Ferry. To the right of the



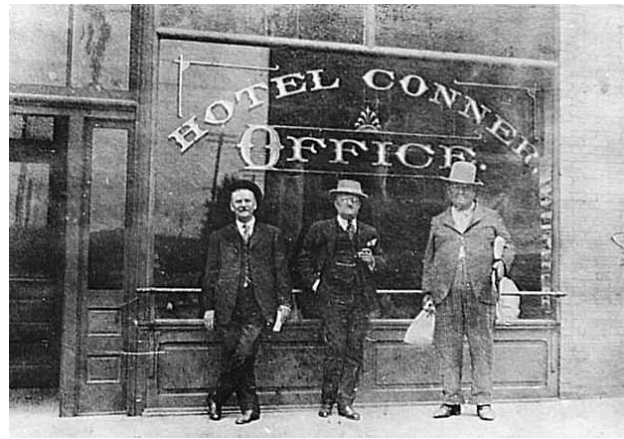
**Figure 38. View of John Brown's Fort on the Murphy Farm, some time between 1894 and 1909. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-77).**

monument were iron tablets erected by the federal government to commemorate the Confederates' September 1862 attack and capture of the town and educate travelers on the events that occurred then (Moyer et al. 2004:44). Residents of Harpers Ferry had mixed feelings about the celebration of John Brown-related sites. On the one hand, it brought in much-needed revenue; on the other hand, some residents were displeased by the celebration of such a controversial figure.

By the late nineteenth century, Harpers Ferry had become not only a popular but also a fashionable place to visit. For some time, the Y-bridge across the Potomac was even a favorite place for eloping couples to get married, with the toll collector officiating. Of this practice, one report said:

It became the fashion for eloping couples from neighboring towns to take the canal boat to Harpers Ferry, where the toll collector of the Y bridge was a retired parson specializing in informal marriage ceremonies. The town was famous for serving superb meals, and its scenery was as popular as its cooking. Honeymooners and tourists often bought, as souvenirs, bricks allegedly taken from John Brown's Fort. . . . (Berge).

While some tourists came to Harpers Ferry for day trips, it became increasingly common for visitors to spend the entire summer in the town. Restaurants, a brewery, and shops sprang up in the lower town's commercial district to serve summer boarders (National Park Service 2008:52). Cottages, boarding houses, and hotels opened to accommodate visitors, while local residents made extra money by renting out rooms in their homes (Porter 2011:19). In the summer these residences were nearly always filled to capacity, with many places receiving more requests than they could accommodate (48). The Conner



**Figure 39. Hotel Conner on Shenandoah Street in downtown Harpers Ferry, 1910. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0417a).**

Hotel, built in 1881 by George W. Green and sold to T. M. Conner in 1889, became one of the preeminent hotels in Harpers Ferry due to its prime location at the intersection of Potomac and Shenandoah Streets (ibid.) [see Figure 39]. Additional smaller hotels were built along Washington Street on the way to Camp Hill. Storer College began renting out three of its normal school buildings in the 1890s to attract summer boarders and used the income to fund student scholarships and its endowment (ibid.). Lockwood House on the Storer College campus served as a boarding house for white tourists each summer until 1900 when it began hosting guests year-round (GWVO Inc./Architects 2005:99). Several other campus buildings did the same, including Lincoln Hall, the Brackett House, and the Morrell House (known as Sparrow's Inn in 1907 and Shenandoah Inn in 1922) and Summit House served up to 125 black and white boarders in separate cottages (93). Eventually, however, the black boarding houses began to serve white tourists as well, as they couldn't afford to turn down potential revenue from white tourists.

Attracted by Harpers Ferry's connections to John Brown's raid and Storer College, African American visitors flocked to the town. Compared to Mount Vernon, where black tourists were met with heckling, racist narratives, and ostracism, Harpers Ferry offered them a place where their history as a people was valued and even celebrated (Kahrl 2008:63). In addition, it gave African Americans of all classes the opportunity to rub shoulders with the elite black Washingtonians who summered in Harpers Ferry, giving them a taste of aristocratic lifestyles (Kahrl 2008:64). The B&O Railroad offered excursions specifically for black tourists, and there were several black business owners in Harpers Ferry to serve this client base; as many as six black proprietors ran boarding houses on and off the Storer College Campus (ibid.). The most prominent were the Lovetts; William and Sarah Lovett operated Lockwood House as a summer boarding house on the Storer College campus beginning in 1883 and in 1889 their son Thomas opened the Hill Top House on Camp Hill. It was Harpers Ferry's largest and most elegant hotel, with luxuries such as hot and cold water, electricity, and private bathrooms for guests (Porter 2011:49). It was known for its stunning view of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. The hotel was so successful that Thomas Lovett was able to expand it in the 1890s, adding thirty more rooms, expanding the dining areas and kitchen, and adding bathrooms (ibid.). For many years, both black and white tourists were allowed to board at Storer College, which was highly unusual at the time.

The active participation of black tourists in leisure activities was a source of contention for the local white population of Harpers Ferry, and African American visitors' celebration of John Brown was especially unsettling. Andrew Kahrl (2008:8-9) argues that in the minds of white residents, the presence of black visitors "who came to pay their respects to Brown and his co-conspirators not only undermined the nation's steps toward sectional reconciliation and its attendant villainization of abolitionists," and even more threatening was the fact that "the presence of black tourists paying homage to a pivotal figure in African American history or simply congregating among themselves in places of their own choosing posed, in white Southerners' minds, a grave threat to the region's uncertain and contested racial hierarchy" (Kahrl 2008:68). Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, newspapers fed into this negative attention placed on African American tourists by breathlessly covering incidents involving Harpers Ferry's black visitors, such as "reckless shooting[s]," "drunken rows at colored picnics," and "indecent assaults" on white women (Kahrl 2008:67).

Many Storer officials and reform-minded African Americans also disapproved of the growth of black tourism, viewing "such excursions and vacations as a distraction from the hard labor of racial uplift, enticing blacks to pursue lifestyles unbecoming of their status in society" (*ibid.*). They feared that black tourists would feed into the worst stereotypes about their race and detract from the fight for racial equality. In addition, they feared having Storer students exposed to the vacationers because the school had always preached "the values of hard work, frugality, and conservative display," and that "ultimate success in life necessitated avoidance of the very activities popular among the summer vacationing crowd," such as excursions, festivals, and picnics (Kahrl 2008:66). In 1896, Storer College decided to only allow white summer boarders at Lockwood House, which some—both black and white—thought would be a better financial decision for the school as white tourists had more disposable income. Storer officials also thought the policy would discourage African Americans from participating in leisure activities that would distract them from the more important task of learning a strong work ethic and trying to better themselves. However, others protested Storer's discriminatory practice, arguing that it was regressive to return to a system of black servants assisting white tourists. Harpers Ferry's hotels and boardinghouses remained largely segregated into the twentieth century.

Tourism in the post-Civil War era was aided by the expansion of transportation systems such as the turnpike and the railroad. At this time, many tourists came to Harpers Ferry via the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which brought both day-travelers and longer-term vacationers as part of its campaign to encourage tourists to visit stops along its route (Poss and Moss 2010:125). The rail company made improvements to services, extending its lines to points west and adding parlor and sleeping cars on the trains (Porter 2011:6). Its special excursions drew city-dwellers from Baltimore and Washington, D.C. who wanted a country experience. Hordes of tourists descended on Harpers Ferry each summer to enjoy the natural and historical offerings of the town, and participate in activities such as boating, fishing, dining, and dancing (Porter 2011:18). The railroad added special excursions to Shannondale Springs, which had become an extremely popular destination by the 1870s (*ibid.*). The railroad also invested in Byrne's Island near the armory grounds, a popular gathering place for picnics and social event in the 1870s. After erecting a bridge between the island and Lower Town as well as a "lunch house" and "dancing pavilion," the railroad bought the island from the U.S. Government in 1878 for \$500 (Porter 2011:18). Continued improvements to the island to make it more



comfortable and attractive drew tourists and locals alike on the weekends; local church groups and the Sons of Jonadab, a Temperance group, hosted events and picnics on the island (*ibid.*). In 1890 the B&O Railroad eventually constructed a twenty-acre amusement park which was known as Island Park; its liveliness and attractions, which included saloons and can-can dancers, were compared to Coney Island and drew tourists between 1880 and 1920 (Poss and Moss 2010:125). For one dollar, residents of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. could take the train to the park (NPS 2011:40). According to the 1946 Harpers Ferry mayor Gilbert Perry, Island Park had “as many as twenty-eight excursion trains a day brought picnickers, bowling clubs, singing societies, and honeymooners up from the city” (Moyer et al. 2004:84).

In the late nineteenth century E. H. Dick, the son-in-law of dairy farmer Rudolph Rau, hoped to capitalize on the tourism boom by developing the caverns on his father-in-law’s property. Incorporated in 1883, Rau’s Cave Company sought to convert “the new subterranean wonder at Bolivar Heights”, which had been compared to Kentucky’s Mammoth Cave and Virginia’s Luray Caverns, to a summer resort complete with cottages (National Park Service 2005:53). This never came to fruition, however, as flooding and waning funds held up the project.

Flooding was a perennial nuisance for residents of Harpers Ferry, but it worked to their advantage among a niche group of adventurous visitors. “Flood tourists” would gather in the town whenever the rivers rose and overflowed the banks (Porter 2011:67). There were several floods throughout the 1870s-1890s, which did varying levels of damage to the town. A group of sixteen of these flood tourists found themselves stranded at Island Park when a flood washed away the footbridge in 1897; they were forced to spend the night in a kitchen building while they waited to be rescued by boat (*ibid.*). The footbridge was again washed away in 1915, though by that point Island Park was already in decline.

Realizing that the ability to increase tourism revenue was in part dependent on the appearance of the town, Harpers Ferry residents and officials undertook several projects to improve the conditions of the town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Harpers Ferry General Improvement Company, which would later become the Harpers Ferry Rural Improvement Association, promoted “community hygiene and beautification” in order to “promote Harpers Ferry as a permanent place of residence and summer resort” (Porter 2011:47-8). The goals of these organizations were to foster a sense of community spirit, improve hygiene in the home and the town as a whole, embark on beautification projects, and increase the value of the town’s real estate and offerings as a place to live and visit (*ibid.*). Improvement organizations undertook projects such as planting trees, erecting electric street lamps in the lower town, and passing ordinances about the cleaning of streets, alleys, privies, pigsties, and other receptacles (Porter 2011:48). The B&O Railroad contributed to this beatification effort as well, adding trees and shrubs to the old musket factory grounds in 1913 and turning the old armory grounds into a “park-like garden” (Moyer et al. 2004:44).

At the turn of the century, tourism supported the lower town’s commercial district and was a major source of businesses’ revenue. Though John Brown’s Fort had been relocated to Murphy’s Farm and was in poor condition, tourists still flocked to see it. Funds were later raised to move the fort to the Storer College campus in 1910. Further improvements were made to the town to attract tourists, including a boardwalk on Potomac Street and an opera house that showed plays and musical entertainment (Moyer et al. 2004:82). Lockwood House and Morrell House still operated as summer boarding houses and Sparrow Inn and Hill

Top House continued to attract wealthy summer boarders and excursionists; a 1901 *Spirit of Jefferson* article reported that 175 excursionists had dined at Hill Top House. The hotel was extremely lucrative—the *Spirit of Jefferson* reported that Thomas Lovett earned \$9,000 in less than five months in 1899, or over \$247,000 in 2016 dollars. Thanks to his success, Lovett was able to make frequent renovations and additions at the turn of the nineteenth century, including a four-story stone annex, an addition of twenty-five rooms and expansion of the dining room and kitchen, and the installation of a 40,000-gallon water tank and a telegraph wire. Major fires in 1912 and 1919 destroyed most of Hill Top House, though the *Mountain Echo* predicted that “the house will rise, phoenix-like, again in the near future.” That it did; Thomas Lovett had enough funds to rebuild each time, even expanding and upgrading his hotel in the process to have a ballroom and provide several rooms with private baths (Moyer et al. 2004:82). A 1910 brochure advertised the “Southern atmosphere” of the hotel and the black servants, who were “efficient and courteous and willing to please” and also provided entertainment:

To witness their performance of “A Negro Camp Meeting”, to see them “Walk the Cake,” to hear them singing their own old spirituals, is to know that you are entering the Southland. A colored orchestra furnishes dance music with a rhythm that you will enjoy in the large ballroom overhanging the beautiful Potomac River.

## Decline of Tourism

Tourism remained a major part of Harpers Ferry’s economic base for the first two decades of the twentieth century, but the golden era of the industry was coming to an end. Recurrent floods required frequent repairs to businesses and attractions, which had a negative impact on tourism revenue during the normally peak seasons. Island Park remained a popular destination at the beginning of the twentieth century—a 1904 issue of the *Spirit of Jefferson* reported that an estimated 4,000 people attended a picnic at the Island -- but by the 1910s the B&O Railroad had neglected Island Park into decline, as the railroad company determined that attendance was not high enough to justify investing in improvements. While the island remained a popular picnicking spot frequented by local residents, the decline of rail excursions, which had largely fed the tourism to the park, cut off its main supply of visitors. By the 1920s, the B&O Railroad had essentially abandoned Island Park and it had become a grassy park without any structures (Moyer et al. 2004:84). The B&O also made fewer weekend stops in Harpers Ferry in response to decreased demand for travel to the area. The company had cut back on many excursion lines, which were declining in popularity due to the rise of automobile travel. Harpers Ferry was becoming less of a resort town where people spent a week, a month, or an entire summer, and becoming more of a location for a day trip or stop during a long drive. Even opportunities for auto tourism were limited, however, because the town was slow to adapt to auto traffic and took several years to pave its roads and install parking lots (Porter 2011:112) [see Figure 40]. The town eventually had graded and paved streets in 1922, and gas stations, lunch stands, and other businesses arose to serve auto tourists, but by then Harpers Ferry already had a reputation for being unable to accommodate auto traffic and did not attract as many tourists as it could have (O’Donnell et al. 2009:II.5).





**Figure 40. The automobile access ramp pictured in the center of the photograph was built to give cars access to the railroad bridge across the Potomac River, 1936. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-1225).**

To compound these woes, widespread financial decline and unemployment in the United States meant that people had less disposable income and were less prone to taking vacations (*ibid.*). The combined power of these factors had a deleterious effect on Harpers Ferry's tourism industry, which in turn negatively affected businesses in the lower town commercial district.

The hotels and boarding houses on Camp Hill managed to maintain a loyal group of annual visitors who formed a "summer colony," which persisted even when other aspects of Harpers Ferry's tourism industry were in decline. However, even this trend ceased to thrive after the stock market crash of 1929. Once the Depression began, many summer boarders stopped visiting Harpers Ferry, and those who owned cottages and other residences sold their properties at a low price that did not earn them a profit (Porter 2011:113). Local businesses could no longer depend on a peak season to earn the bulk of their profits and had to rely on the local market for revenue, and had to adapt their goods and services to local needs (*ibid.*). A Works Progress Administration program called the Writer's Project wrote local histories for communities across the United States during the Depression; when writers turned their attention to Harpers Ferry they observed that the town,

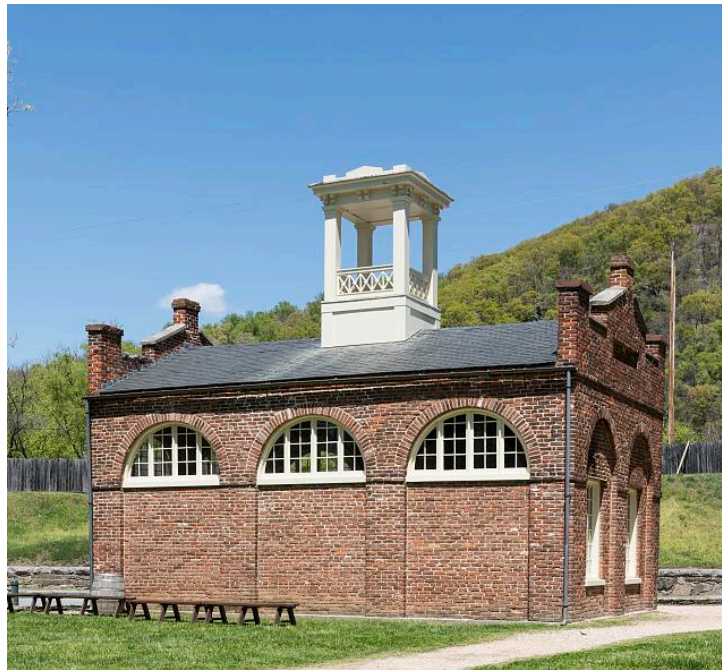
war-battered and flood-damaged, is but a relic of the thriving village that before the War between the States centered about the Government armory and Hall's Rifle Works and seemed destined to become an important industrial town. Its population has declined more than 2/3 since that prosperous era, and only the memory of the early industrial activity remains (1941:224).

Most of the tourists who visited the town were artists or hikers drawn to Harpers Ferry for its scenic views, and they did not stay long or spend very much money. In spite of the fact that Harpers Ferry was a shell of its former self, it still drew tourists each summer. The opening of the Charles Town Race Track in 1933 drew tourists during the racing season, though that only lasted one to two weeks. In general, Harpers Ferry was becoming a quiet, sleepy small town. The WPA observed that:

In the summer, tourists-service enterprises blossom along the main thoroughfares; tourist homes, closed during winter months, reopen; and post card and souvenir venders are busy. Nearly every citizen considers himself a volunteer guide, and a few charge small fees for conducting the sightseer up the natural stone steps, past the Harper House to Jefferson's Rock and John Brown's Fort. During winter months the town's folk return to their quiet round of church suppers, bingo parties, knitting circles, and occasional trips to the movies at Charles Town or Martinsburg (ibid.).

Raymond Biller, who grew up on Washington Street in Bolivar in the 1920s and 1930s, acted as one of those "volunteer guides." He recalls that:

Way before the Park came, there were tourists coming to town. Not like they come now, but they were here. They'd mostly come by car, but sometimes there were excursion trains. My brother lived in that Harpers Ferry cemetery house, and I would go down there on Saturdays and Sundays and offer a tour to the people who'd come to see Jefferson Rock and old John Brown's fort, which was on the Storer College grounds at that time. They'd tip me and sometimes I'd make five or six dollars a day, which was a whole lot of money back then (Hale) [see Figure 4].



**Figure 41. The structure now called John Brown's Fort was erected in 1848 as the U.S. Armory's fire engine and guard house, 2015. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

## Establishment of the National Historical Park

By the mid to late 1940s, Harpers Ferry had experienced the Depression, two World Wars, and several devastating floods. It had declined to the degree that it was frequently described as a ghost town and its starkness was the focus of several articles, including one from *National Geographic* that observed in 1945 that the town

has suffered so grievously from a succession of floods that the lower part of the town looks like an Italian hill village after the Nazis left, almost bereft of residents and trade alike. The little town is one of steep, and tall

narrow gabled houses, almost stately in their old simplicity of line, even though half in ruins on their hillside perches (Atwood).

However, just the year before, Harpers Ferry had been designated a National Monument, and local residents were hopeful that the designation would reignite tourism and bolster the economy (Miete 1955). Dr. Henry McDonald, president of Storer College and former town mayor, had campaigned to have Harpers Ferry established as a national monument and was optimistic that the town would one day be “flooded with tourists,” predicting the construction of highways that would facilitate the access of tourists to the historic site (Davis 1976:6).

A perennial concern arose yet again among local residents; namely, that they were hesitant to use the town as a vehicle to memorialize and celebrate John Brown. Southern affinity groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans protested what they viewed as a biased interpretation of history (Moyer et al. 2004:151). Still, the John Brown history was what drew tourists and allowed the town to gain the federally-recognized status that it held. When the centennial of John Brown’s raid arrived in 1959, local residents were reluctant to commemorate it but, as *Newsweek* observed, they were “not exactly blinded to the commercial potential of the present plans to improve the town as a national monument, or of the four-day John Brown centennial observance” (Bradlee 1959:37-8). Likewise, the John Brown Fort provided education, entertainment, and jobs for local residents. Margaret Jackson Smelley worked there in the 1950s and recalled her experience during a 2014 interview with Elaine Eff:

Margaret Jackson Smelley: I also worked in the John Brown's Fort while it was on campus. It was like one person would leave, and the next person takes over. So, I took over after my older sister, she got a job in Massachusetts one summer, Boston, I think it was. So, I took the job during the summer.

Elaine Eff: And what was the job?

MJS: To receive the visitors as they came in as a receptionist as they came to visit John Brown's Fort. Within the fort, they had various memorabilia inside of the fort, and then they had little handouts that the persons could buy for a dime. It only cost them a dime to get in, ten cents to get in. And not only was the fort used as a museum, but it was also used for the aviation, to see low-flying airplanes as they came down the Shenandoah River.

And I was supposed to observe this as an observation point. And I used that to, the information that I saw if a plane came down, call and report it. From then, they—to wherever I was supposed to do then.

And also I had souvenirs to sell. They had various souvenirs to sell. Some people would buy them. One was a picture of John Brown, and a little of his history on a sheet of paper. Then the others were like ceramic tea cups, and Mr. Patrick, who was one of the professors at the school, that was his job to make sure that someone was in the fort every day, and I was there every day, seven days a week, every day in the summertime.

And I also would do it on weekends in the fall up until it got too cold because there was no heat nor air in the engine house in John Brown's Fort. So, therefore, I would do it until it got too cold to do that and let people come.

But in the fall, people would really come because they came not only for John Brown's Fort, but the area is so pretty that you saw the foliage change and the colors, and they came to see the mountains, the color of the mountains and so forth and so on.

And I would get quite a few people from all over the world, you know, and they signed the book. I don't know whatever happened to it, but they had a book for people to sign.

Articles from the mid-1950s highlighted the still-ruinous state of Harpers Ferry: “Buildings stood deserted, deteriorating. Gray walls of heavy fieldstone gaped with empty window openings. Through them I glimpsed fallen rafters, creeping vegetation, and tattered bits of open sky. It seemed ages, not just years, since people could have lived and worked here” (Wentzel 1957:399) and added, “Now along Shenandoah Street, once a busy main thoroughfare, businesses and stores are closed. Land and buildings have been bought by West Virginia and turned over to the Federal Government for the National Monument. Few townspeople are about, and they are usually very old or very young. The old-timers idle on unused steps, smoking, chatting, or dreaming of happier days. The youngsters play, untroubled by the gloom” (402)—but emphasized that, as a 1956 B&O Railroad article put it, “The citizenry of Harpers Ferry is taking a new lease on life and though the community boasts a population of only 700, these 700 are joining wholeheartedly in the rebuilding of the town as a national monument” (Cobb 1956:6). The article went on to observe that homes were being refurbished and previously vacant houses were beginning to sell, all due to the establishment of the national monument (*ibid.*). The B&O Railroad revived its excursion line for a special event in which 400 visitors came to Harpers Ferry by a B&O train sponsored by the Somerset Rail Booster Club. Townspeople provided the passengers with guided tours and offered their private vehicles for transportation of the group (*ibid.*). A 1957 article observed that the town’s inhabitants “pin their hopes for the future upon a growing interest in the Ferry’s dramatic past” (Wentzel 1957:408).

The Hill Top House also drew tourists to Harpers Ferry. The Lovetts had sold the hotel to Fred McGee in 1926, who then sold it to Baltimore lawyer Dixie Kilham in 1955. Kilham had spent many of his childhood vacations in Harpers Ferry and it was the birthplace of many of his ancestors. Reportedly he had a “deep and sentimental attachment for the little town [and] great plans to aid in future development of the area” (Cobb 1956:9). Kilham had the hotel restored in the 1950s; the finished product had air conditioning and heating, 55 rooms, modern baths, and a dining room for 340 (Hill Top House 1977). Kilham was president of the Hilltop Players and the Hilltop School of Arts in Baltimore and brought this theater expertise to Harpers Ferry, where he threw “summerstock theatricals” to attract tourists (Moyer et al. 2004:141). The hotel also provided jobs for local residents, as Sharon Spriggs recalled during our interview: “every kid I know in Harpers Ferry worked at that Hill Top House at one time or another. That's where you had your first job, where you learned to work. . .” Tom Shelton also recalled working at the hotel as a teenager:

Yeah. I worked there when I was sixteen. Great place, a lot of fun, lot of interesting people. The hotel was in bad shape then, but they kept it up enough to keep it going, you know. Dixie Kilham owned it, started it, him and his wife and daughter -- well, no, his wife -- him and his friend and his daughter ran the business, ran it for years. I think Dixie Kilham, I'm not too sure when he died, but after he died, then the place kinda, you know, they ran it for a while, or his daughter tried to run it for a while or whatever, she turned it over to someone to run and it ran itself into the ground. But wonderful place to go, and I always used to have to carry the luggage up to the rooms. And one of the rooms, they said-- and it's the story I have to go with -- that Thomas Jefferson stayed in that room. And I, me, I was kinda a comedian, I'd go up and say, "Yeah, and I don't think they did anything to the room since then!" People would laugh, you know. And, you know, you could go out on the back side and it had this whole glass area, and you could sit out there and eat, and you'd look right down on the Shenandoah and -- I get it mixed up with the Potomac -- and eat your breakfast and look down and you'd see people using the river, canoeing or swimming, fishing, and you could sit there. It was a great place to go, and used to get busloads of people from D.C. and Baltimore, they'd come up for tours and whatever and they'd go down to Harpers Ferry Park and whatever, and that was a big thing for people from the city and stuff that wanted to see Harpers Ferry and tour Harpers Ferry. So he benefited, you know, by feeding them,

and they benefited by just being up in this area.

The influx of tourists in the late 1950s through the 1960s encouraged the development of private museums and attractions in hopes of appealing to visitors there to see the national monument. The John Brown Wax Museum, owned by Dixie Kilham, opened on High Street and was devoted to depicting scenes of John Brown's career from childhood to hanging with full life-like wax figures. Another museum was established fifty feet from park property and displayed items associated with the town and John Brown (Moyer et al. 2004:192). In addition, the Civil War Showcase opened in the 1960s near Bolivar Heights, where the KOA Campground is located today. The Showcase capitalized on the draw of local Civil War history by creating exhibits and living history activities to appeal to tourists. In the 1960s and 1970s there were attempts to develop the caverns by Harpers Ferry Caverns, Incorporated, and to construct a Yogi Bear's Jellystone Camp Resort near the caves, though these ventures only lasted a few years before failing (National Park Service 2011:59-61). These attractions, as well as the gift shops and other businesses established in Lower Town and the surrounding area, took advantage of the economic revival Harpers Ferry was undergoing.

## Connections to Tourism in the Present Day

Because the park dominates Harpers Ferry geographically and economically, it is easy to center discussions on tourism around the park specifically. However, other tourist attractions have arisen concomitantly or as a result of the development of the park. A local resident who works in the tourism industry notes that the park certainly draws a significant number of tourists – it is the top Google search for this area—but recreation activities are almost equally popular. Hiking, whitewater rafting, and bicycling are the most common recreational activities in the area right now. Agri-tourism, as mentioned by Jane Tabb, also attracts visitors, and interest in agriculture and organic foods has been met with the increase of farm-to-table restaurants. Also appealing to tourists are the history of the area; its arts, crafts, and culture, which is enhanced by proximity to Washington, D.C; music, plays, and other cultural events such as the Contemporary Theaters Festival in Shepherdstown, which has been ongoing for over twenty-five years. The diversity of offerings is enhanced by the ease of getting around the towns of Jefferson County, one can move easily from one type of activity to any other. The park itself is not isolated; it is fairly easy to travel to other national parks and battlefields in the area. There is also the appeal of a quaint town; Harpers Ferry has always maintained a small-town Main Street feel. A local resident observed that tourism as we know it today in Harpers Ferry is very different from how it looked before the development of the park. She speculated that more single people visit the area rather than families, that tour buses and other guided tours are no longer popular as more people seek out an experience and access to resources rather than being told how to move through a space and what to do. She attributes this to the fact that, in her opinion, most of the tourists are Millennials coming from Washington, D.C.; the youngest demographic of tourists with the highest discretionary incomes. Jane Tabb noted in our interview that there is a new initiative to develop tours in Charles Town, which she views as a positive development because otherwise, “a lot of people would just go to Harpers Ferry, turn around and go back and we need to get them farther in the county and spend some more dollars.” In addition, many of the

most popular attractions are no longer around, like the Scottish Castle, which was removed in 1962 during park renovations, or the Hill Top Hotel, which closed in 2008 and has since fallen into disrepair [see Figure 42]. Interviewees lamented having missed the opportunity to explore the Castle or the decline of the Hill Top Hotel [see Figure 43]. Regarding the latter, Tom Shelton said during our interview:

But yeah, it's a shame that they just let it fall down, and crumble up, and the new people that bought it wanted to put a health spa there, and I said, in Harpers Ferry? I don't think that's gonna happen. Long as that Town Council stays strong, that's not gonna happen. It's gonna keep falling down til it rots away.



**Figure 42. Union officer Royal Emerson Whitman built his home, locally known as the Scottish Castle, shortly after the Civil War. Photo by Jack E. Boucher, 1961. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

Local residents consistently mentioned the difficulty of maintaining a business that caters to tourist rather than local markets. Turnover in local business has been frequent ever since the 1960s when the park was established. Interviewees were hard-pressed to identify any business owners who had been in town over a long time period, though many named the Country Café, the Anvil, and Westwind Pottery, as the oldest businesses in town. All three businesses operated for twenty to thirty years, though Westwind Pottery has since closed permanently. Harpers Ferry has not been able to sustain a viable year-round commercial district; most businesses reportedly have a nine-month business plan to deal with the “dead season.” One resident attributed the high rate of turnover to the fact that people come to Harpers Ferry from out of town and see a large number of tourists in the summer and expect business to be that brisk year-round, not realizing that winter is a slow season for businesses. Another resident noted that there has been some improvement for locals, as there was a time when all businesses were seasonal and catered solely to tourists, so it used to be

difficult for permanent residents to find a place to eat or take care of an errand. Today, most businesses in Lower Town still target a tourist market, but they tend to be open longer throughout the year.

Tourism in Harpers Ferry has never again reached the heights of the late nineteenth century. However, though it may not be as robust of an industry as it once was, tourism remains an important part of Harpers Ferry's history, economy, and identity. Most local residents are touched by the tourism industry in some way, whether they work in the service or hospitality industry, or work for the park, or live in Lower Town surrounded by the park. Given Harpers Ferry's prime location near cities and transportation routes, its scenic beauty, and its historical connections, it seems likely that tourism will remain a key feature of Harpers Ferry's traditional activities. As the town's history has shown, adjustments are sometimes required to adapt to new demands and technologies, but Harpers Ferry has the natural resources and appeal to draw visitors regardless of these changes.



**Figure 43. View of Hill Top Hotel, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**



## CHAPTER FOUR: ADDITIONAL GROUPS WITH PARK-RELATED ASSOCIATIONS

In the course of our research, we identified several groups and activities that, like those described in Chapter Three, have some kind of historical and/or contemporary ties to the park and its surrounding areas. They include: (1) Alumni, faculty, and staff of Storer College; (2) Reenactors and living history participants; (3) Farm families; (4) armory workers and their descendants; (5) Residents of Virginus Island; (6) Black advocacy organizations and leaders; (7) Members of the Masonic Lodge; (8) Recreation professionals; (9) Members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans; and (10) Those involved in subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering. While these groups had or have a demonstrable connection to the park, they do not necessarily have such strong and long-lasting ties to the area and its resources, or they do not form a cohesive community to the degree of the groups featured in Chapter Three. Still, their connections to the land and history of Harpers Ferry is significant enough to warrant special attention.

### Alumni, Faculty, and Staff of Storer College

Storer College students, faculty, and staff formed a close-knit community on their Camp Hill campus. Many were newcomers to Harpers Ferry; much of the student body and faculty were from Maryland, Virginia, and other states on the eastern seaboard. LeRoy Johnson, a former chemistry teacher and Dean at Storer College, suggested in a 1989 interview that the dearth of local students was due to the fact that Harpers Ferry lacked a public high school for local black students until 1938 when a segregated school was built in Charles Town, so very few students could pass the state examination to attend Storer College. Consequently, very few black students came to Storer from local towns.

The founding of Storer College was seminal for African Americans in West Virginia and beyond [see Figure 44]. Throughout the late 1800s, the school's dedication to education and the betterment of its students



**Figure 44. Storer College students gathered in front of John Brown's Fort for an evening choral session, 1915. Photo courtesy of the Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-01126).**



gave it a well-regarded reputation, which was much-needed in Harpers Ferry as some white residents were initially hostile to the school's presence. In addition, the college brought revenue and employment to Harpers Ferry, which made some residents look upon it favorably (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:95). In its first year of operating the college spent less than \$1,000, which increased to \$90,000 in 1887; the funds were likely much needed in Harpers Ferry (ibid.). The late 1800s would prove to be the college's peak in some ways; in 1889 it had its greatest number of attendees at 265. From there, enrollment fluctuated, with 110 in 1904 and 194 in 1914 (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:103).

Initially operating primarily as a normal school for training primary and secondary teachers, Storer College added a two-year Junior College degree in 1921 and a four-year degree program in Elementary Education, Education, Science, and Home Economics in 1939. The president at the time, Dr. Henry McDonald, was primarily concerned with a practical rather than academic focus; he wanted to train students to have skills to work, as evidenced by his expansion of the Industrial Department in 1903 (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:104). In that same year the Trustees of Storer College voted to add several practical courses including blacksmithing, gardening, and animal raising (O'Donnell et al. 2009:VI.9). McDonald's plans to further expand the course offerings in the 1920s were met with challenges due to funding shortages and conflicts with the Trustees' goals (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:106). However, McDonald did manage to have a Pre-Medic course offered as of 1934.

McDonald adhered to the Booker T. Washington model of "racial uplift," the idea that African Americans would accept some degree of segregation and disenfranchisement in exchange for white support of their education, agriculture, and economics. He was intent on training African Americans to be skilled workers rather than enriching their intellect. The next president, and the first black one, Dr. Richard I. McKinney, prioritized creating black leaders committed to social and civic responsibility (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:110). McDonald was not pleased with the selection of McKinney for the position of president, saying:

I still think our ancestry, training, and larger fitness enable us—white people—to do somethings [sic] for colored students, which they can get in no other way. I think that my successor should be a white man—if one can be found, for the sake of continuing the experiment of inter-racial cooperation. When the time comes that a Negro is placed at the head of things here, that will be the time when all workers will inevitably be colored. And that ends such cooperation... (GWWO, Inc./Architects 2005:106).

The college saw an uptick in enrollment after World War II, mostly thanks to the GI Bill. Stanley Spurlock attended from 1947 to 1951 thanks to support from this bill, as he recalled in a 2014 interview with Elaine Eff:

Elaine Eff: Now, did you attend on the GI Bill?

Stanley Spurlock: Yes. That was quite an enticement.

EE: Tell me about that. That is an amazing opportunity. Tell me what that meant to you.

SS: Oh, definitely, definitely. I don't think I would have gone to college, had it not been for the GI Bill. I don't know. I wanted to go to college. I was a pretty good student in high school, but you had to procure this money, you know. You had to get this money together.

So, it would have been very—a lot of men and women, I guess, worked their way through, but the GI Bill was just a godsend, that's all. You had your books, tuition, all of that was paid for, and all you had to pay was your food, your dormitory expenses and so forth.

Though attendance was growing, Storer continued to face funding challenges throughout the 1950s, and the college closed permanently in 1955. LeRoy D. Johnson, a chemistry teacher and dean at the college beginning in 1934, said in a 1989 interview that the college was always wanting for money; the institution depended on the state of West Virginia for funding and, to a lesser extent, the Baptist Church, who gave the school very little support. At one point Johnson was sent to travel around West Virginia to raise funds at churches but did not receive a favorable response from congregations. The college lacked a stable source of donations and McDonald never built an endowment for the school. In addition, the Board of Trustees made no attempt to fundraise when the State of West Virginia withdrew its support in 1955. The combination of these proved to be the undoing of Storer College.

The college also lacked strong support from Harpers Ferry. Students often had to deal with racism and discrimination from local residents when they ventured into town. Businesses sometimes refused to serve them, and some students were the target of jeers and taunting. Johnson said the feeling went both ways: “town and gown was not too close. Either white or black wasn’t” (ibid.). Still, the college offered many programs and activities that townspeople were invited to attend, such as concerts, lectures, and declamatory contests.

In spite of the hostility around them, or maybe because of it, the Storer student body and faculty were very close. LeRoy Johnson recalls that though much of Harpers Ferry was segregated, black and white faculty were friendly and socialized when there were campus events. In a 2013 interview with Steve Warwick, Storer alumnus DeWitt Jacobs said of the school, “It was more like a family, a big family than a school.” Alumna Dorothy Young Taylor echoed his sentiment, saying of the student body:

It was a friendly, fun-loving type of group because it was small enough. Everybody knew everybody else. Even if you didn't live on campus, you knew everybody there, and when we'd go to that little canteen, like it was called at Storer, we'd sit there, and people would talk and laugh and play and have fun, and, you know, you either brought your lunch from home, or you sit there and ate. You could buy lunch there, whatever they would have at that time.

Alumna Cynthia Oates also stressed the closeness of the student body at Storer in a 2013 interview with Steve Warwick:

What really stands out is just how friendly everybody was. I mean, I guess you can't really understand this, but it was like a big family. People looked after you, took care of you, were concerned about you, and that was teachers and dorm mothers [*laughs*] and all the other students, yeah.

Being “looked after” often took the form of strict rules about how students were to conduct themselves in the dorms and when they had to be indoors. Dewitt Jacobs recalled some of those rules:

Steve Warwick: What were some of the rules that you had to follow while you were at Storer?

DeWitt Jacobs: Yeah, that's it. That's it. The main, the most rule that bothered us most is that girls had to be back on campus before midnight, and we would travel to Martinsburg by train to the movies on the weekends, on Fridays we were allowed to go, and we had to be back on campus by eleven o'clock. And we'd get back at about a quarter of eleven at the station, and then we had to run up that big hill, from the station to the hill to get the

girls back on time. I'll never forget that hill. That was the main thing.

We always had that one chaperone when we go out to the movies. I think the girls were allowed out like once a month, something like that. The boys weren't that bad. It wasn't that strict, I mean.

Students were expected to work hard and not squander the educational opportunities afforded to them, but they also enjoyed some leisure time during which they socialized with their friends, read, went for walks, or ventured into Harpers Ferry or Charles Town to see a movie or have something to eat.

Storer College closed in 1955 and, within ten years, the National Park Service acquired the campus, however many of the school's alumni remained attached to the college and, by association, to the park. Annual reunions are an opportunity for former students to commemorate their years at Storer, to acknowledge Storer's legacy, and to renew ties with their former classmates. The reunion usually lasts Friday through Sunday and includes a dinner, a picnic, a dinner dance, and a worship service. Fewer alumni attend the reunion events each year, but the Storer College Alumni Association remains active and continues the customs of the annual event. However, Alvin Catlett, president of the Alumni Association, expressed concern for the future, noting that he's seen reunion attendance decline from about 80-85 people to 50-60 in the four years he has been president. He added in a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff:

it's been a challenge to keep things going mostly because the membership is dying. I mean, that's the bottom line. The membership is dying, and so it's tough, and to get younger folks involved. And younger folks could be either descendants or friends. They don't have to be bloodline. So, we're pushing as much as we can to try to keep this thing going. It's amazing that there are people who have heard of Storer College and people who haven't heard of Storer College. We just keep trying to—we're trying to keep things out there. We're trying to keep that exposure out there.



**Figure 45. Jefferson Rock, located along the Appalachian Trail overlooking the Shenandoah River, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

Storer alumni remain connected to places of significance around Harpers Ferry. Of course there is Camp Hill, the location of the Storer campus. Jefferson Rock has also been mentioned by several alumni as a place of importance to them [see Figure 45]. It was a favorite spot to spend time with friends when they were undergraduates, and today Storer alumni take their children and grandchildren to visit the rock. Alumni of Storer College have also maintained close ties with the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church; the college had control of the church in 1911, then deeded the property to church trustees [see Figure 46]. Students used to be required to attend church services there, and today the church, part of HFNHP, hosts Storer College alumni events.



**Figure 46. Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, date unknown. HABS photograph. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

## Reenactors and Living History Participants

Reenactors and living history participants have been connected to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park since the 1970s [see Figure 47]. In 2000, the comic strip *Dick Tracy* even featured a storyline in which the title character pursued a suspect to Harpers Ferry where he was participating in a Civil War reenactment. Reenactment groups and living history volunteers are invited to the park on a regular basis to provide demonstrations of Civil War arms, camp life, etc., and to provide visitors with a visual reference of historic Harpers Ferry. Tourists enjoy the spectacle, which is both entertaining and educational, and participants enjoy it as well. The park's living history program was fairly robust in the 1970s-1990s and was primarily staffed by volunteers. Today, Civil War reenactor groups are more common and visit from states all over the East Coast.

In the 1960s, re-enactments mostly took the form of portraying battles. In the 1970s, this expanded to include living history, which featured elements such as arts and crafts and nineteenth century Regency dance. The park's living history program was in place by 1970, with most of the activities concentrated in the Harper House. In the early 1970s, Superintendent Davis and park staff worked to refine the interpretive program and

define their goals with regard to the living history program. A park employee in charge of domestic arts wrote in 1973 that "The purpose of the living history program at the Harper House is to give the visitor an experience in the domestic life of an average family living in the mid-1800's. This is to be accomplished through sight, sound, taste, smell, and participation. ..." (Moyer et al. 2004:221). Interpreters wore period dress and performed domestic tasks such as cooking and gardening (ibid.). One popular activity among staff and visitors alike was that interpreters would prepare lunch for park staff in the Harper House kitchen, a process that visitors were invited to watch. Tom Shelton was working for the park at that time and recalled the daily midday meal to be entertaining for everyone involved:

Tom Shelton: Up in the Harper House, we had the women who cooked in the old kitchen, the Harper kitchen. That's also what the Harper House, downtown -- and they actually cooked our meals there. And we had chickens down behind the Master Armorer's house, that's where they kept the chickens, and they told the women when they got these chickens, don't name them. And I was standing there, and I said, I know why they're not gonna name them! But some of the girls wouldn't listen, they named them, and when it was time to cut their heads off, you know...but that was, they would let the tours come and see it til after a while somebody said, that's cruelty to animals! I said, that's chicken! You eat chicken every day, I said, but now you're just seeing what the real world is doing to your chicken before it's there on your plate! Oh, this chicken is good. But that's the way I grew up too, we had chickens, cows that we butchered, and whatever, and like I said we had a garden. But they were just showing the people til somebody complained. We did that for a couple of years down in the park and the women would cook our meals.

Erve Chambers: So that's when you were working for the park.

TS: Yeah. That's when I was working for the park.

EC: And they would actually cook the meals there, and raise the -- when was that?

TS: That was '73.

EC: '73.

TS: Yeah, '73 to '74. You know, they had tours during the summer or whatever. But we had a ball. Everybody was dressed up in period clothes and Gwennie, that still works down at the park, she worked there at the same time I did. And I don't know if you talked to her.

Megan Bailey: Not yet.

TS: Ok, she and I, we still laugh and joke about it when I go over and see her. I think you might want to talk to her pretty soon cause I think she might be ready to retire now. I think she's right on the tip, she's gotta have about forty years now. But we would all sit in the kitchen. cause we ate at lunchtime, we went up and they had a table in there, you know, cause the pot was over the fireplace and set back in the fireplace, and they cooked it in this big black pot. Well, the first couple of meals weren't that great, but as they got used to cooking that way, the meal...oh, they were awesome! They were amazing, I was tasting them and saying, give me another plate of that. But I used to always have the, we would all be sitting around the table in our different period clothes and people would come up on the porch and look in the window at us and I would tell them, Freeze! We got tourists coming. And nobody would move, nobody would say a word, we just sat there, had our head down, didn't move. And we'd wait til the windows and doorway got full, and then we started talking and doing our regular stuff, and people were jumping and hollering, Hoo! Ha! The wax is moving! The wax figures is moving and talking! I said, I been called many things before, but not a wax figure. Then we'd turn around and answered their questions, that really blew their mind. And when go away, they'd say, Tom, that's the best idea ever, we're gonna do that all the time, and people would start doing it.

The living history program was further expanded under Superintendent Conway. A tavern, a dry goods store, an apothecary, and blacksmith shop were installed and occupied by rangers and seasonal



employees portraying barkeepers, armory workers, pharmacists, storekeepers, and more (Moyer et al. 2004:222). The tailor shop was staffed by a woman who sewed the costumes for the interpretive staff. Park staff provided demonstrations and provided interpretive material in the third person, showing how to do things and describing it. A former volunteer recalled that the park used to rely on more first-person reenactors, but the actors often did not know the history well enough and would improvise when they received questions about history, while historians and archeologists were more familiar with the town's history but were terrible actors.

In the early 1970s living history demonstrations were established on Bolivar Heights to portray the garrison aspect of the Civil War soldier's life. The intention, as one park employee wrote, was that "Hopefully the demonstration will involve the visitor so he will have an appreciation of the life and times of the Civil War and want to probe further into the many aspects of the Civil War. Also the demonstration will give the visitor a feeling for the how and why of what happened at Harpers Ferry" (Roach and Smith 1972). The park recruited members of the Youth Conservation Corps to portray soldiers, stipulating that participants must be white males with an interest in the Civil War who are willing to do manual labor, take orders, and wear a wool uniform (ibid.).



**Figure 47. A living history participant demonstrates the skills used by armory blacksmiths, 2013. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

Artillery demonstrations were also very popular at the time; park staff showed visitors how to assemble and disassemble guns at the Master Armorer's House and discharged guns outside. Tom Shelton also participated in this aspect of the living history program, as he recounted in our interview:

But working in the Living History, I did the gun demonstration, shooting the 1803 flintlock and the 1843 percussion rifle. That was really interesting. And plus, it gave me the knowledge of learning the history of the park and, you know, what the soldiers actually went through when they were fighting, and you could tell these people that. So that was interesting to me. Of course I loved shooting those guns, you know, I never put the right powder in there. People, my boss would say, he'd call me in about once every couple of weeks, he'd say, Tom, you know, and I'd say, Yes, but that's the only way I'm gonna draw their attention! He said, You're making people duck out here on the streets, he said, cause the sound would bounce off the buildings. He said, people would duck! I said, well, they knew where the gun demonstration was, didn't they. He said, I can't get mad at you, he said, just cut it down. So I would for a couple more weeks, then I'd let off one, you know.

The living history program continued through the 1980s, but the park began hiring more volunteer interpreters in the 1980s and 1990s due to lack of funds for paid staff. The park also allowed interpretive groups to propose or staff living history activities as long as they interpreted one of the park's four significant themes: the Industrial Revolution, John Brown's Raid, the Civil War, and African-American history. The park came to rely on these groups to provide interpretive activities, as David Larson wrote in 1990: "we have built long-term relationships with leaders in the living history community and with units. . . In short, long-term relationships and communication with participant leaders have been essential to our success." Living history

groups could suggest an activity or impression and, if it conformed to the park's goals, they were allowed to come and interpret it. However, the National Park Service does not allow re-enactments, i.e. portraying opposing lines under fire or the taking of casualties, which the National Park Service believes does "a disservice to those who really fought and died" (Larson 1991). Instead, the park encouraged portrayals of social and military life during the mid-1800s, which include encampments and artillery demonstrations. Visitors were allowed to wander the encampments and ask questions of the volunteers. Meanwhile, the park was still running its own interpretive programs, though they took the form of events such as the reenactment of the John Brown Raid, which takes place each October, and the Presidential Election Day 1860 program, which also occurs in autumn.

Civil War re-enactment groups began coming to the park more frequently in the 1980s and 1990s, perhaps motivated, as one longtime reenactor suggested, by the release of the 1990 Ken Burns documentary *The Civil War* and the 1993 film *Gettysburg*, which led to an increased interest in the Civil War [see Figure 48]. According to one participant in reenactments, living history groups would often organize a circuit of demonstrations at Harpers Ferry, Monocacy National Battlefield, Antietam National Battlefield, and Gettysburg National Military Park, with three to four events scheduled per season. Even today, many organized living history or reenactment groups visit the park, either because they've been invited by the park to do a demonstration, or they request to attend. While the living history program of the 1970s has fallen away, the park still fields proposals from units who wish to march through Harpers Ferry, sometimes on their way to Antietam or Gettysburg, and set up an encampment on Bolivar Heights or the Shenandoah shoreline. These groups are not allowed to have loaded weapons, but they do perform artillery demonstrations with Civil War replica cannons and other period weapons. They also portray artillery soldiers in the 1862 surrender of Union soldiers during the Confederate capture of Bolivar Heights (Williams 2004). One encampment, for example, presented a scene of troops recuperating and resupplying after battle and a surgeon tending to their wounds. About 15 Civil War re-enactment groups—mostly from Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and Pennsylvania—come to the park regularly, sometimes visiting multiple times a month. Often they are invited by the park to set up a Civil War camp on Hamilton St. or Bolivar Heights and give artillery demonstrations at special events. Living history groups, such as the Frederick Ladies Relief Society,



**Figure 48. An artillery demonstration by the Baltimore Light Artillery at Harpers Ferry NHP, 1998. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

also come a few times a year to portray civilian life and participate in special programs. These groups also request permission to host their own events, such as marches and camps, at the park. One park employee suggested that Harpers Ferry attracts a lot of these re-enactment units because unlike Antietam or Gettysburg, where battles only lasted a few days, Harpers Ferry was a battleground for 4 years. In addition, Harpers Ferry has a local master gunsmith who sells historically accurate parts and makes repairs to authentic and reproduction Civil War guns. While reenactors come every year, a park employee noticed that their attendance has been diminishing a little in recent years.

A longtime reenactor who has been part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Maryland Infantry and the Baltimore Light Artillery observed that the reenactment groups' members are growing older and slowing down. He described them as "car-based reenactors" as they set up the Civil War camp but sleep in their cars instead of the tents. Conflicts have arisen between those who are focused on period authenticity and those who are more concerned with having an interesting experience. One reenactor observed that in the 1970s, women began putting on Civil War uniforms and pretending to be men, which ruffled the feathers of purists. He recalled a park policy at Antietam National Battlefield that barred women from portraying male soldiers, a policy that was ruled to be illegal by a federal judge when a female reenactor, Lauren Cook Burgess, brought the case to court in 1989. As one journalist pointed out, "her case became a cause celebre among Civil War buffs, who bitterly debated whether middle-aged men with beer bellies had more right than Burgess to portray an 18-year-old rebel soldier" (Meyer 1993). The participation of African Americans in Confederate units was another source of contention. Though these challenges and conflicts exist, the units return to Harpers Ferry because they maintain an enduring love of history, an academic interest in the weapons and costumes, a commitment to authenticity, and an enjoyment of educating the public.

## **Armory Workers and Their Descendants**

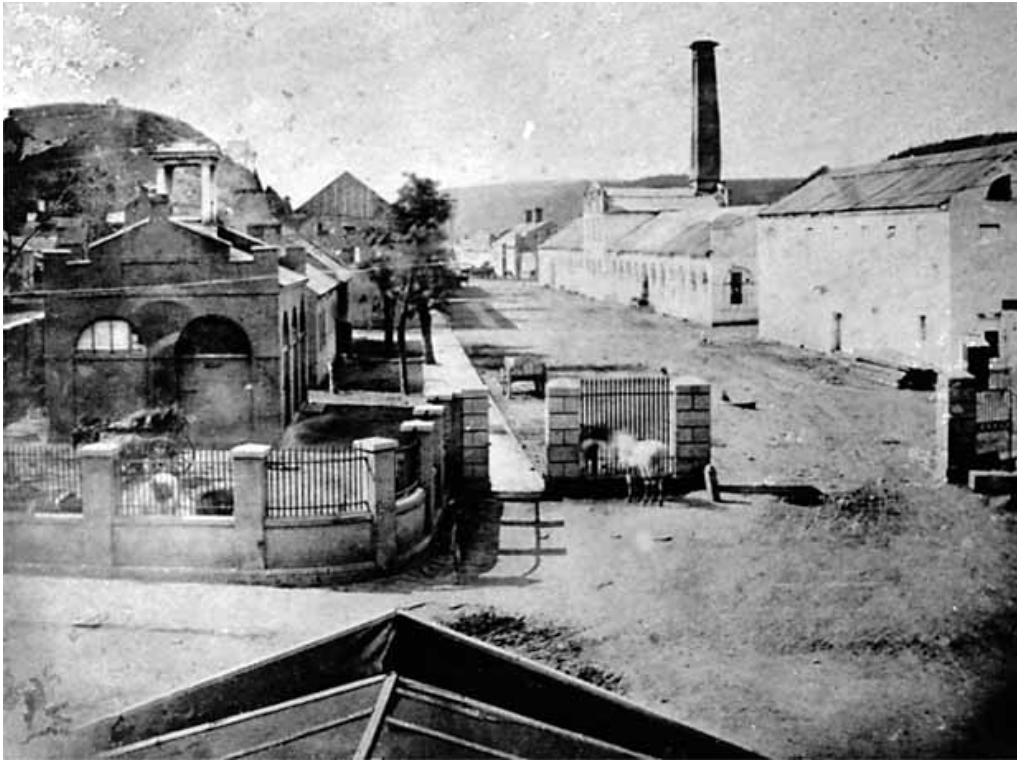
Given that the U.S. Armory was a major employer and the basis of Harpers Ferry's economy for decades, it played a significant role in shaping the town's landscape and community. A sizeable population of armory workers arose in the nineteenth century, though many left Harpers Ferry during and after the Civil War. Still, it is possible that some present-day residents have ties to the armory.

### **A History of the U.S. Armory**

The U.S. Armory and Arsenal were constructed beginning in 1799 on a 125-acre plot of land between the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers [see Figure 49]. Weapon production began in 1802 and by 1810 the armory had an annual production of 10,000 arms per year (National Register of Historic Places 2011:9). The workforce grew over time as well, with 25 men in 1802 and about 400 by 1859 (ibid.). In 1809, the government made a contract with Fernando Fairfax to cut 1400 cords of his woodland on Loudoun Heights, located above the town of Harpers Ferry on the south side of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers (ibid.). The wood was used to heat the armory shops and the armory workers' houses and charcoal was used to fuel iron smelting



operations in the armory's furnaces. In the 1820s and 1830s the armory contracted with others to do the work of cutting the wood, transporting it, and turning it into charcoal (National Register of Historic Places 2011:10). At least some of the time these workers lived in temporary camps in the forest while tending charcoal hearths.



**Figure 49. Main entrance to the Harpers Ferry Armory, 1862. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0027).**

These temporary shelters are known as colliers' huts, and they were typically small impermanent structures with crude stone hearths at one end (National Register of Historic Places 2011:11). Colliers' huts were typically built rather like teepees, with a roughly circular arrangement of wooden poles covered with bark shingles. Doors might be made of sacking, but some period photographs show a wood-framed rectangular door, built into the side of the hut.

The rest of the armory workers tended to live in Harpers Ferry proper [see Figure 50]. The federal government had trouble attracting and keeping skilled craftsmen, due in part to the occurrence of annual epidemics of "bilious fever" (Poss and Moss 2010:35). The expansion of armory facilities in the first two decades of the nineteenth century meant that armory workers living in town had to deal with crowded living conditions that facilitated the spread of disease. Contagious diseases such as cholera sometimes became so prevalent that they interrupted work in the armory (Shackel 1993:12.12). Armory officials also found it difficult to find people to perform unskilled labor such as digging the canals and other kinds of manual labor because the prevalence of dysentery, typhoid, yellow fever, and malaria made prospective employees hesitant to take a job (Theriault 2009:59). During these epidemics, the armory was called upon to assist as a major institution during these times of crisis. For example, during the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1849-1850 the armory provided lime to be used as a disinfectant (Shackel 1993:12.13). In addition, the town lacked proper drainage and sewage facilities which contaminated the drinking water resulting in disease or death (Poss and

Moss 2010:35). The armory tried to address this situation by cleaning up the water works and constructing cisterns to secure a dependable water source (36).



**Figure 50. Armorer's dwelling house on the northwest side of Shenandoah Street, date unknown. HABS photograph. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

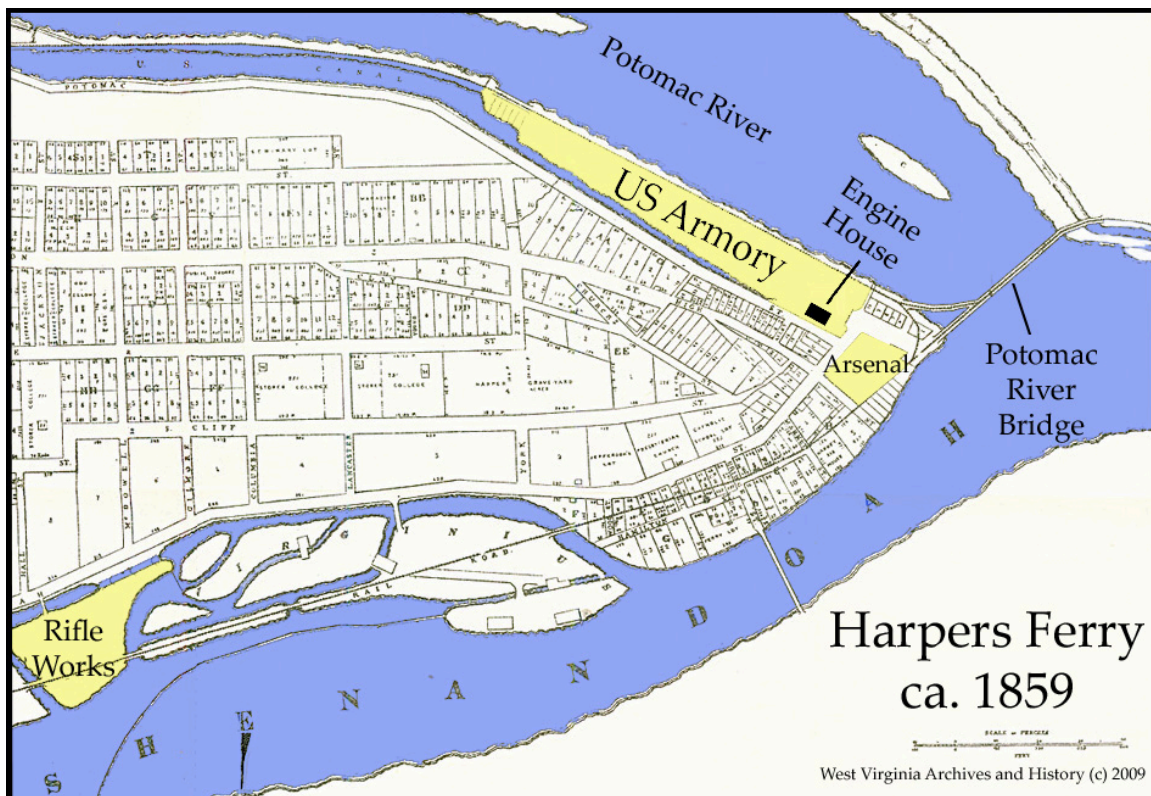
A third challenge to attracting and keeping employees was the lack of adequate housing. Paymaster Samuel Annin reported in 1811 that those with families were the most reliable workers but they were difficult to retain because they kept leaving to find better accommodations elsewhere, such as Pittsburgh (Snell 1981:38). Superintendent James Stubblefield wrote to the War Department in 1807 informing them of the situation, writing:

There are 5 or 6 very good steady workmen who have been employed in this armory for a considerable time, have married and settled themselves. They are very solicituous (sic) to be furnished with housing by the public as those they at present occupy they are obliged to pay a very exorbitant rent for, and in part have no houses at all & the payment of rent reduces their pay below "Other's of equal abilities (Snell 1981:28).

Due to a land monopoly held by the Wager family, armory workers couldn't buy private land in Harpers Ferry until 1836, but even then prices were so high that they could not usually afford to buy land until 1852 when the U.S. Government established a land reform program that allowed unused armory property to be divided into lots and sold to workers (Snell 1973:7). They could either rent a tenement located on the Wager property or rent a government-owned house on private land. The only way to purchase private land and a house was to move out of Harpers Ferry and into Bolivar, though that required several miles of travel to the armory each day (ibid.). Workers were tasked with providing their own lodging and many ended up building one or two-room shacks that were "damp, poorly lighted and unventilated" (Poss and Moss 2010:35). There was little oversight in the construction of these dwellings in the first two decades of the armory's operations, and workers had to purchase their own construction materials, which resulted in a variety of house sizes and appearances (Shackel 1993:18.4). Workers were also responsible for providing their own food and material goods (ibid.). In this way Harpers Ferry was not a traditional company town; the government did not control the workers' domestic lives in any way. However, between 1801 and 1845 175 dwellings were

constructed for armory workers to rent for about \$100 per year (Poss and Moss 2010:36). Still, there seemed to be a constant housing shortage because the armory continued to hire additional workers in order to increase production, but did not have enough housing for them or the funding to construct enough dwellings (Snell 1981:39). Superintendent James Stubblefield proposed allowing armorers to construct their own residences on armory land and make their own additions, improvements, and renovations to armory-owned houses and armory-constructed houses (*ibid.*). With this policy Stubblefield was able to create an additional 53 residences for armory workers. By 1830, there were about 124 residences on armory land (Snell 1981:90). Following the land reform of 1852 armory workers could buy and build on land in Harpers Ferry.

The exponential growth of the armory led to the development of Harpers Ferry as well. Businesses sprang up to serve the growing population and the commercial district in the lower town expanded. In the mid-1840s, armory Superintendent Major John Symington created a master plan for the town to organize it into a rectilinear grid [see Figure 51]. Streets were widened, old buildings were demolished, and new buildings were constructed (O'Donnell et al. 2009: II.3). By 1859, Camp Hill had become a small neighborhood of armory dwellings and private residences (O'Donnell et al. 2009: V.2).



**Figure 51. Map of Harpers Ferry showing government armory, arsenal, and rifle works. Adapted from S. Howell Brown 1869 map. Courtesy of West Virginia State Archives.**

By the mid-1850s about half of all white males in Harpers Ferry worked for the armory (Snell 1973:4). Armory employees generally worked ten hours a day and earned just over two dollars per day. When production began in 1802, the quota system was in place: each worker produced a specific number of arms. There was less focus on completing work in a certain amount of time, so workers could take as long or as little time as they wanted. Workers who met their quota in just a few weeks could spend the extra time farming or engaged in other occupations (Shackel 1993:8.11). From the 1810s onward, piecework became the dominant

form of production; each worker was responsible for producing a particular part or stage in the process of gun making (Moyer and Shackel 2008:4). In 1818, the Federal government had contracted John Hall, a Maine inventor, to develop and test machinery for a breechloading flintlock rifle. The 1819 Hall Breechloading Rifle was the first model to use machine-made interchangeable parts on an industrial scale. Armory workers felt threatened by this development because the machinery could be operated by “boys of but eighteen years of age, who never did a stroke of work in his life,” as Hall said, and felt that their skilled craftsmanship was under threat and undervalued (*ibid.*) Between 1807 and the 1840s, the armory’s division of labor increased by almost twenty times (Shackel 1993:18.6). Master Armorer Benjamin Moor, who came to the armory in 1830, standardized production. He broke down the gun production process into very small jobs so armorers no longer made a complete gun, nor did the guns require skilled craftsmanship; workers merely needed to know how to perform one small aspect of the larger process (Shackel 1993:8.12). Craft-trained artisans rejected this method, as well as Moor’s implementation of time-discipline and the increased efficiency in arms-making (*ibid.*). Armory workers were faced with increasing discipline even outside of work, as the armory implemented rules in the 1840s that did not tolerate idleness, drunkenness, abusive or disrespectful language, or disorderly conduct (Moyer et al. 2004: 19). Armorers were required to follow a standard workday, reinforced by the installation of a clock. In 1842, armory workers went on a week-long strike to protest the increasing strictness and the removal of their rights and dignity as craftsmen, but their protests fell on deaf ears and a law was put into place that established military superintendents at U.S. armories and arsenals, which wasn’t removed until 1854 (*ibid.*). Some disgruntled workers left as a result of these changes; one local resident whose ancestors were armory workers left in 1842 when the armory began to modernize. As skilled craftsmen, they were offended when told that they would have to tend machines and have their wages cut, so they moved to Ohio to claim a land grant.

In spite of resistance from its workers, the armory continued to modernize and grow into a more efficient and disciplined factory system. It also grew in size from six buildings and a few employees to more than fifty buildings and almost 250 workers (Crosbie and Lee 2009: 43).

In the years leading up to the Civil War, a growing awareness of political tension and conflict put Harpers Ferry on edge, and local residents and armory workers proposed the creation of a militia armed with rifles from the armory. Thus the Floyd Guards formed in 1858 with 64 volunteer militia members who borrowed weapons from the armory (Hearn 1996:65). Abolitionist John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry would put the armory at the focus of national attention in 1859. He spent the summer of that year on a Maryland farm, training 22 men in military maneuvers and planning for his attack on Harpers Ferry. On October 16, 1859, Brown led most of his men into Harpers Ferry at night and captured about fifty men at the Musket Factory yards (National Park Service 2011:18). The town’s local militia learned of his attack and surrounded the armory building. Brown hid in the fire engine house with his accomplices and nine prisoners, though he was captured the next morning when a troop of Marines broke down the doors (*ibid.*). Brown was tried and hanged in Charles Town in December. Though his raid was a failure according to his plan, it shook the nation and Harpers Ferry. Armory Superintendent Alfred Barbour became cautious in hiring new armory employees, fearing that northern transplants would add to the growing tensions in Harpers Ferry (Moyer and Shackel

2008:8). In addition, following the raid there were more concerns about assaults on the armory, so Superintendent Barbour wrote to Captain William Maynadier of the Ordnance Department to request a nighttime watch force, as the militia members worked at the armory during the day and could not be on duty at night.

Armory officials were right to be concerned with the protection of the armory. Once Virginia seceded from the Union, Confederate forces focused on seizing the armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Federal officer Lt. Roger Jones, who was stationed at Harpers Ferry, was afraid that the advancing Confederate troops would capture the town, so on April 18, 1861 Jones ordered all factory buildings to be set on fire and the weapons destroyed to save them from Confederate capture (*ibid.*). However, the manufacturing equipment remained intact, and when Harpers Ferry was captured by Confederate troops in 1861, the equipment was captured as well. The South, being more agriculturally-focused, had not developed industry to the same extent as northern states and was lacking in an efficient way to produce arms in large quantities (Lee 2011:58). Virginia troops captured the armory and during the next two months soldiers packed all the machinery from the Rifle Works for shipment to Richmond. From there, the equipment from this factory traveled to Fayetteville, North Carolina, where it produced arms for the Confederacy. Many of the armory workers followed the machinery south so that they could remain employed in an occupation they were skilled in, and perhaps saw that because skilled workers were in demand, this was an opportunity to climb the ranks with more ease than in Harpers Ferry (Lee 2011:60-1). According to the 1861 personnel records of the C.S. Armory in Richmond, the superintendent, all four of the shop foremen, and almost sixteen percent of the workforce had formerly been part of the Harpers Ferry Armory workforce (Lee 2011:61). Back in Harpers Ferry, the armory destruction was so complete – machinery removed, buildings burned down or used for storage and staging supplies—that many of the local residents, including armory workers, left the town for other parts of Jefferson County and beyond.

By the end of the Civil War, the armory grounds had been destroyed and were no longer useable in their current form. Many armory workers purchased property at government sales of lots before the Civil War, but they abandoned the property and never returned (Shackel 1993:3.2). Residents of Harpers Ferry hoped that the U.S. Armory would experience a renaissance and that they could rebuild their industrial economy, the town's foundation for sixty years. The U.S. Government determined that it would sell the property instead at a public auction in 1868. Included in the sale were the government-owned houses and lots throughout Harpers Ferry, the armory and arsenal grounds along the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, waterpower rights, ferry privileges on the Shenandoah River, and the government ore bank (GWWO Inc./Architects 2005:85). Captain F.C. Adams of the Harpers Ferry Manufacturing and Water Power Company purchased the armory, arsenal, and waterpower rights, which excited local people in anticipation of renewed industrial development. They purchased government lots in hopes of Adams's plan resulting in future employment for them, but the industry never materialized and residents defaulted on their loans. Most of their property returned to federal ownership (*ibid.*). In the 1880s, the upper portion of the armory grounds were purchased by Thomas Savery for his Harpers Ferry Paper Company mill and the B&O Railroad was given access to the lower portion where embankments, a depot, and platform were built (National Park Service 2011:37). In 1916, the B&O Railroad turned part of the grounds into a commemorative garden and

landscaped the area with flowers, trees, and shrubs (38). By 1930 the B&O had acquired most of the former armory property from the Harpers Ferry Paper Company and used it to build improvements for the railroad. The armory grounds were eventually acquired by the National Park Service, and today are almost completely covered by railroad track embankments; none of the 1916 plantings exist today.



**Figure 52. Harpers Ferry Paper Company and the Armory Canal behind it, ca. 1900. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NFP Historic Photo Collection (HF-1143).**

## Links to the Present Day

While it is possible that some descendants of armory workers remain in Harpers Ferry at present, it is likely that they are few in number owing to the mass exodus of armory workers during and after the Civil War. Several local residents told us that the descendants who remain tend to live on Loudoun Heights, or “the mountain” as they frequently called it [see Figure 53]. This could be due to the fact that Loudoun Heights is where some of the earliest armory workers lived. Mike Jenkins, a resident of Loudoun Heights who has done extensive research on this topic, provided a historical overview during our interview:

Mike Jenkins: Now Ferdinand Fairfax had this remnant land on the Blue Ridge Mountain over here and the armory in the early years constructed some leases. They would lease 10-acre parcels from him to do charcoal on. They realized they needed a more perpetual supply so they started trying to negotiate with him, several negotiations are 1811, they were over there doing a couple different surveys and then all they can really agree to by 1813 is to just lease the timber so that's what they end up doing and it really is strange because that was the only interest the government had was in the timber. They never had what we call 'right of soil' so when the first person comes to the mountain to start doing charcoal I would probably tell you was 1809. I'm pretty confident that person was a Piper, don't know for sure but we'd probably again say that they came out of Maryland. Now, the armory had a practice of allowing people to build if I call it a shack as a residence--let's call it--to perform this activity it wasn't sensible for them to have to commute back and forth to the area because again the charcoal had to be tended overnight, process it. Once they started, it had it smolder for about 10 days before it became charcoal. So they had to be there pretty much 24 hours to tend it so the armory tolerated or permitted them to start putting up houses, OK. Now, a rough house, it was not gonna be anything elaborate because these were very poor people. Records will show us they couldn't read, they couldn't write, they weren't educated at all but they did know the land, they knew how to live off the land.

Now, the charcoal industry obviously could not be one person. As I would explain to anybody, it was a family operation, probably took 30, 40 people but Lewis [Piper] became the key point person for the armory 'cause he's the only person you'll see in the records but obviously he had to engage other people to cut, to drag, to build these charcoal hearths, otherwise manage the entire operation and then they would deliver, I want to say the earliest records I've seen I want to think are 1819 but we're talking about 3,000 bushels of charcoal coming off the mountain in a three-month time frame, OK, three-month time frame, you know, and this consistently happening and it only grew. By the time we get to the 1840s we're talking 6,000 bushels of again charcoal coming off the mountain. If you see these roads you understand that people--you kind of wonder like how do they do it because these people couldn't afford a lot of livestock. First off, they didn't have a place to graze 'em, it was very much a manual labor process and these roads were very, very narrow, very steep, very awkward but again what comes out of the record is, as I said, the government only leased the perpetual right to the timber. Ferdinand Fairfax dies about 1819, his administrators trying to settle his estate. He'd be what some people would call land-poor. He had plenty of land but no money so his administrator saw fit to try to sell what land he could to settle the debts. He realizes that that land was not sold so he constructs four deeds to these charcoalers for right of soil only, K, so for instance Lewis Piper gets 15 acres, John [Piper] gets 3/4 acres, George and Christian [Piper] I think get 11 acres and then the person that's unconnected is like I say William Kraham gets 11 acres so there are these little parcels inside this 1,395 that gets sold out and for the most part it goes unnoticed but these people, I mean, they always build their houses where there's water. They could care less where else they had to go but they weren't gonna carry water so you always find these domestic places at the water sources which pretty much still exist in their proper places today and all this goes kind of nonchalant for 20, maybe even 30 years. In 1854, well let me kinda put in the timeline, by 1844 the superintendent of the armory sees fit that coal is a more viable source of fuel than charcoal so he converts all the armory houses to coal instead of cordwood coming off the public land. They hire what they called a wood ranger to patrol trespassers on the woodland and by 1854 they decide to go into a court case to evict these people so, again, I believe the charcoal era ended at 1854. Government sees that we don't need these people anymore, we need to get rid of 'em. Now we've allowed them to live there for 40 years so we're gonna get rid of 'em and they took the first one to court and the record shows us that they just felt it was too expensive to prosecute these people for what it was worth so they basically abandon the case and they turn a blind eye to the fact that they're over there. Armory gets destroyed in 1861 at the very outset of the war and nobody cares anymore what happens over there, I mean the focus is entirely different. Of course the soldiers are right in these peoples' backyards which I can't quite ever understand is how you have soldiers coming right past your house and yet they don't really affect you and it isn't til 1869 that they attempt to sell their timber rights, OK. Those sales kinda don't go through, they have to end up re-leasing them, they don't get sold til 1880 at which time the government does sell the timber rights but in the meantime, state of West Virginia's been formed, OK, it got formed in 1863 and they realized that we're not getting taxes off the land so they try to sell the land for the delinquent taxes so what you end up with on the West Virginia side here is you have a different landowner and a different timber owner. It isn't until 1900 that those two rights join by the same owner so interesting enough, 1978 comes along. Appalachian Trail wants to come through so the Appalachian Trail very clearly sees who owns West Virginia but now they're like 'who owns Virginia?' They don't know, Virginia never got settled. The only thing that was on Virginia was timber rights. They couldn't figure out who owns the soil. They actually awarded the soil to the Ferdinand Fairfax heirs so they end up taking like 194 acres let's say of the 512 that fell on Loudoun County, the other 313 is still in limbo today. There's a very clear timber owner. There's not so much of a clear landowner [laughs] so, so anyhow got a little sidetracked off of the original question there.

Megan Bailey: No, no, this is great--

MJ: --but it's just been interesting to my research how you had separate timber interests, you had separate land interests, a lot of people didn't realize in the early years of that differentiation. In other words, these Pipers, they didn't even present their information to the court, the government presented the deed for them to the court to say 'OK here is 10 acres of right of soil exclusive' and excluded the timber, it was clear that the government owned the timber but we got a right of soil. The thing is why were they infringing on our timber? Are they cutting our timber to enhance their property and I don't know that that ever came out or not but obviously there was a clear misunderstanding guess of, you know, you own the timber not the land/I own the timber but not the land and how you go about again settling that. Now, Silver Grove the community over there right now again is the area that Louis Piper had. It's 15 acres that Louis Piper had is basically where Silver Grove is today so again all these people that live there have actually no clue. They honestly didn't even have a deed to their property, they didn't care necessarily about that, the only way they got a clear title



eventually to their land is when Nicewarner was again interested in settling his boundaries to clear his title and working with the Appalachian Trail to defend his case. He ended up getting a surveyor and it was basically one of these questions to the residents, 'What do you own? Because whatever you own, I don't and that determines what else I do own, once I know what you own,' so he ended up establishing boundaries with these local people and they did a quick claim, just did a quick claim to them in order to perfect his title so again you're talking about the people there, you can't really go to the courthouse and find a lot of deed transactions between these people because they weren't educated, they didn't understand the legal system, they didn't engage a lawyer to interpret the legal system for them and they just want to be left alone. 'Just leave me alone, let me live here on my mountain, I'm happy and you're happy, just don't--stay away, just stay away' so... and in a lot of respects that philosophy still carries on today but they don't follow it because of the historical reason, it's probably just something that's been instilled in their upbringing and you know for many years they just--how can I say--resented the fact that 'oh, Nicewarner doesn't own the mountain, nobody owns the mountain, it's my mountain [laughs]' and that's the way they looked at it, it's my mountain, ya know? I mean, this absentee person that claims they own it, yeah, we see him once a year and we know him when we see him but do we really care about him? No, because again he was not from the area, was not local, was just looking for an investment and so yeah but like I say the Pipers still exist and would be fifth generation, maybe sixth at this point. The Cogles, the Staubs, then came in the Everhardts which could have come in from Loudoun County a little bit and then various other names that just kind of intermarried into those, you know, the more common names there. Are they going anywhere? No. They're not going anywhere. They're gonna stay there [laughs]. I mean, they're rooted there.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Armory used Loudoun Heights as its primary source of wood and charcoal for its manufacturing needs (Winter 1992:129). This became a major operation; 2,000 wagonloads of wood were cut per year by 1829 and necessitated the construction of timber and charcoal roads and charcoal hearths (ibid.). To support these activities, the U.S. Government allowed armory workers to set up small dwellings and farmsteads while they were working on site. Armory workers who were cutting timber could erect shanties or log buildings on a lot for the duration of their work. However, a series of court cases reveals that these armory workers ended up squatting on the land. For example, Lewis Piper had cleared timber for eighteen to twenty years while he worked for the armory and had a log building and a garden provided



**Figure 53. View of Loudoun Heights above the Shenandoah River, photographed between 1861 and 1865. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

by the government. Eight to ten years later, he left the log house and allowed his brother, John Piper, to occupy the property and expand the lot. An armory official demanded that he leave the premises but Piper refused and the case went to court, where it was ruled that the Pipers no longer had claim to the land (230). Another suit filed in 1856 charged Thomas Kirwan with squatting on Loudoun Heights, and though the



government won their case, Kirwan continued to occupy the land (ibid.). These are just two of numerous cases where defendants were accused of squatting on government timber lands.

Local residents we spoke to reinforced the notion that descendants of armory workers were connected to the timber and charcoal industries on Loudoun Heights and had remained in that area. However, though these families may have lived in Harpers Ferry for generations, they may not feel a connection to the armory or have substantial knowledge about their family history. Loudoun Heights resident Mike Jenkins observed during our interview that:

Everybody in my area is fourth, fifth generation related back to the armory. They had that area up there for charcoal, produced charcoal for the armory between the years of, let's say 1813 to 1854. The reason the community up there is established is because of that charcoal. When the charcoal industry pretty much faded away and was replaced by coal, they had no other place to go so they just remained behind. They were knowledgeable about how to live off the land and they continued to do just that. Each kid would eventually get a portion of the home place if we'll call it that [*laughs*] and it just got chiseled up smaller, smaller, smaller, and I would tell you that everyone that probably lives up there has no connection or relationship of what--If they were to go back even three generations, they couldn't tell you much about their family history but if you take 'em back four or five generations, they all come back to the armory but again they don't relate to that and just in general aren't interested, I guess.

Local residents described a disconnect between those living on Loudoun Heights and the rest of Harpers Ferry. Mike Jenkins characterized their attitude as, 'Just leave me alone, let me live here on my mountain, I'm happy and you're happy, just don't--stay away, just stay away',” an attitude that he says still exists among residents of Loudoun Heights today. According to a resident of Charles Town, people living on Loudoun Heights had a reputation for being rough and difficult. He recounted an anecdote about Robert Carr, a police officer in Charles Town: “They used to give him the dirty detail and ship him over the mountain where things were bad, where it seemed like the people in the mountain liked him...they really respected him.” A state policeman went there by himself one time and was harassed by the mountain’s residents; he called Carr who defused the whole situation and “probably saved the state policeman from injury or worse” (Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society Inc. 2011).

In 2003, Senator Robert Byrd introduced legislation to expand the National Park’s boundary; the land acquisition included 131 acres of land on Loudoun Heights. This put Loudoun Heights residents in closer contact with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, though a resident we spoke to said that that people living in the area have little interaction with the park. They don’t feel engaged with the park; they don’t attend public meetings or see anything issued from the park, so they feel a bit forgotten. Furthermore, according to another resident, those living on Loudoun Heights see that the park’s focus is on the historic Lower Town and Schoolhouse Ridge and believe that the park neglects Loudoun Heights. Another local resident said that people on Loudoun Heights do not have a desire to connect to the park, plus there’s little community outreach targeted at them to include them in park activities. Mike Jenkins summarized this relationship during our interview with him:

In all honesty, I'll tell ya the local community, the local community... let's say the mountain--is not really connected to the park much at all. Nobody necessarily visits the park or does anything for the park. They're familiar with the land and have been pretty much all their life and like myself, they'll do--you know, they'll want mushrooms--they'll probably do some poaching at different times [*laughs*], most of them don't really walk or get out in the woods probably like their forefathers did so I couldn't tell you that anybody else that I'm really familiar with uses the park.

## Farm Families

Although Harpers Ferry's best-known industries may be manufacturing and tourism, the longest, most continuous practice in this region has been agriculture. Cultivation of crops in the Shenandoah and Potomac Valleys dates back to at least the Late Woodland period (AD 900-1600) (Hassler and Ebersole 2016:16-19). Farming continues to this day, and at present Jefferson County has the most total acres of farmland and produces the most corn, soybeans, and wheat compared to any other county in West Virginia. The floodplains and fertile valleys are ideal locations for farming, as they provide nutrient-rich soil needed for successful crop cultivation. In an 1874 issue of the *Spirit of Jefferson*, H.G. Smith touted the desirability of the region's land, saying:

Jefferson County is unsurpassable, both in its natural beauty, and in its productiveness. The lands lie in gentle slopes, which allow a perfect drainage, while it is a rare thing to find a field steep enough to suffer from washing. The soil is mostly red or chocolate-colored clay, resting on a foundation of the finest limestone, and its productiveness is abundantly evidenced by the fact that fields which have been cultivated for nearly a century, some of them without ever having had a particle of manure put upon them, now promise to yield not less than twenty bushels of wheat to the acre. Lands which have been better cared for will go far beyond that this season, and we heard one farmer, who has over two hundred acres to cut, and who is not anxious to sell, declare that he expected to gather a full crop of twenty-five bushels to the acre. The crops of oats and grass are proportionately fine, while corn gives abundant promise. We saw plenty of wheat, roughly put in upon corn ground, which promised a yield of twenty bushels to the acre, and we know no portion of Pennsylvania which would give a return for such imperfect tillage. Here and there a farmer can be found who has resorted to the use of quick lime with decided advantage, but most of them ignore the best and most natural fertilizer of the soil. Little manure of any kind is applied, and the magnificent crop which is now seen growing is the unforced product of a soil whose natural capacity has not been seriously affected by almost a century of imperfect tillage. There is no land in Lancaster county which would make such a showing after receiving similar treatment.

The fertile land of the river valleys began attracting settlers in the eighteenth century, and continued to entice farmers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the longtime farm families in Harpers Ferry and its environs can trace their land ownership back to this time period, or even earlier. For example, our interviewee Locke Wysong's family settled in the Harpers Ferry area in the 1700s and has been farming there ever since. He grew up on a 145-acre farm in Ranson, West Virginia, about nine miles west of Harpers Ferry, and at one point the Wysong family owned two other farms with a total of 563 acres. Later, they owned a 400-acre farm between Rippon and Myerstown, West Virginia. His father raised dairy cows as well as corn, barley, and hay, and other family members raised beef cattle. He and his siblings sold the family farm in 2004 and he now owns a 110-acre farm that is largely operated by his son and daughter. Another one of our interviewees, Jane Tabb, married into the Tabb family, which owns Lyle C. Tabb & Sons Incorporated near Leetown, West Virginia. The farm has been owned and worked by five generations of Tabbs. The family can trace their ownership of the land to 1860, though the Tabbs waited until after the Civil War ended to farm the land (in 1872), and in 1930 it became a dairy farm. Local resident Russell Roper can trace his family's connections to farming to even before the Civil War, as he explained in a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff:

Well, the Ropers basically, according to the history in the courthouse, two Roper brothers came over here from England and had a grant. They bought considerable land, considerable acreage of land in Jefferson County, which is now Route 340, and it extended from Route 340 to the river, and there's a road there that's a name road in the state, a name road in the county called Roper's Road, and they owned roughly around 2,800

acres from there to the river. And they owned slaves, and the two brothers had children, and one of the siblings married a mulatto lady, a woman, and that's how my father's father, my grandfather, came about.

When slaves were emancipated in 1865, Roper's grandfather left the plantation he had been working on and worked independently on farms in the area; Roper's father joined him until he purchased his own farm in 1907, where Roper himself worked until 1995.

Because farming tends to be a family business in which property, skills, and expert knowledge are passed down from one generation to the next, it is not unusual for a farm to remain in the possession of one family for decades or even centuries, as in the case of the Wysongs, Tabbs, and Ropers. In the following section we will provide an overview of the history of farming in Harpers Ferry, with special attention paid to those families who have well-established agricultural enterprises that have tied them to the land and natural resources in the region over a long period of time.

## A History of Farming in Harpers Ferry and Its Environs

The first settlers to arrive in present-day Jefferson County were German-speaking people and people of Scotch-Irish descent from the Delaware and Susquehanna Valleys in Pennsylvania, as well as English-descended peoples from eastern Virginia (National Park Service 2005:38). Initially, the Fairfax family owned this land as the result of a grant from King Charles II. Most settlers seeking inexpensive, fertile land in the Shenandoah Valley were required to endure a lengthy process to obtain it, which included visiting a proprietary agent to purchase a warrant for the location of the land one wished to own, then allowing the county surveyor to lay out the number of acres being acquired in a certificate of survey, then awaiting the issuance of a patent or grant conveying fee simple title (ownership) to the settler. Settlers were subject to an annual quitrent payment to the Proprietor, "a feudal arrangement wherein a landowner pays rent instead of having to perform obligatory services to the lord" (Walsh and Fox 1974:3). Throughout the late eighteenth century, most settlers purchased land for farmsteads, though some retained land through grants (Griffith 2003:2).

The arrival of settlers in the Shenandoah Valley in the mid-to-late 1700s resulted in significant changes to the landscape. First, they cleared trees and plowed land to make it suitable for cultivation, and then they planted crops and acquired livestock. All of the settlers had histories of agricultural practice, but they had different strategies in organizing their operations that reflected regional diversity. The Germans and Scotch-Irish usually operated small family farms that did not usually rely on slave labor, while the Virginians brought the plantation system that was familiar to them in the Piedmont and Tidewater regions, which relied on slave labor to raise a single crop, tobacco (*ibid.*). Scotch-Irish immigrants helped introduce the practice of driving livestock such as cattle and sheep, which they led through old Native American paths in the Shenandoah Valley to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other northern cities (Mitchell 1972:478). Virginia quickly grew into one of the leaders in improving cattle breeds, while the Valley itself came to be known as one of the state's best regions for cattle breeding. Agriculture in the river valleys also distinguished itself by the particular farming methods used by Pennsylvania settlers, which were characterized by crop rotation and frequent manuring, which allowed for better nourished, balanced soils capable of producing more than their

counterparts in the rest of the state (Craven 1926:85-6). Farms in this area also used primarily free labor to cultivate small and diverse plots of land, unlike other areas of Virginia (158).

As the eighteenth century progressed, traditional subsistence farming gave way to increasing specialization and commodification of agricultural products, and agriculture was proving to be a financially successful endeavor in Jefferson County. As the era of land speculators came to an end and the original land grants were divided in the late eighteenth century, more land was available for cultivation (Theriault 2009:62). Tobacco was replaced by wheat as the primary crop, followed by corn and rye, and oats and barley were also raised, although in smaller quantities (34). Flax and hemp were also cultivated, likely in order to produce cloth and cordage for local use. Farmers usually kept horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep as well. Though farmers owned a significant amount of acreage, farms tended to be small and concentrated; only two or three people actively worked each farm and most of the land was not actively cultivated (*ibid.*). Farms tended to be self-sufficient, with their own spinning wheels, looms and other equipment needed to make cloth, and tools to make their own footwear, harnesses, and leather goods (*ibid.*). Some of the wealthier farmers likely had their own smithy for equipment repairs as well.

In spite of the prosperity generated by the development and expansion of agriculture, Harpers Ferry remained a “provincial village” at the end of the eighteenth century. (Poss and Moss 2010:33) The town had a country store and sawmill but lacked schools, churches, and other communal institutions. However, with the establishment of the U.S. armory and the expansion of transportation systems such as the railroad and canal, this had all changed by the late 1830s. At that point, Harpers Ferry was a growing town distinct from the farmland around it. Agricultural business was booming by the 1840s, with the Shenandoah Valley forming part of the “bread basket” region where grain was bountiful and supported the growth of mills and expanded transportation routes for grinding and shipping (GWVO Inc./Architects 2005:24). Tended by a combination of owners, tenants, hired workers, and slaves, farmland around Harpers Ferry grew wheat, corn, rye, oats, and hay, and typically livestock such as pigs and sheep were raised. A large number of cider presses also opened during this time, suggesting the expansion of apple orchards in Jefferson County in the mid-1800s (Theriault 2009:87).

This period of agricultural prosperity was cut short by the onset of the Civil War. Farming activities were interrupted and often prevented altogether by military activity taking place around Harpers Ferry. Farmers either had to evacuate their farms or were essentially held captive on their land while Union and Confederate troops battled for control of the area. War activity devastated Jefferson County’s farmland, particularly that which belonged to Southern sympathizers as it had been occupied by Union forces who exacted retribution by destroying it (Theriault 2009:106). For example, the farm belonging to John Engle, near Engle, West Virginia, was occupied by Union troops who did \$4,197 worth of damage, taking or destroying 1882 panels of fence, 25 acres of timber, 250 bushels of wheat, 196 barrels of corn, seven horses, three cattle, twelve sheep, ten cords of wood, and fifteen enslaved workers (*ibid.*).

The war years were full of uncertainty and loss for farmers in the Harpers Ferry area, but once the war ended, farming rebounded more quickly than other industries. Land was plentiful and cheap after the war, and those who had access to money and labor could get a farm up and running again fairly easily. In addition,

the Shenandoah Valley practiced a diversified agriculture that allowed it to focus on cultivating whatever was most profitable and manageable. For example, when the growth of cheap beef cattle, sheep, and pig production in the Midwest drove down the value of livestock on the East Coast in the second half of the nineteenth century, farmers in Jefferson County were not negatively affected because of their ability to be adaptable and turn their focus to other, more lucrative agricultural products (National Park Service 2008:50). In addition, because most farms in Jefferson County did not rely on slave labor in order to operate, area farmers did not have to contend with a significant loss of labor following Emancipation. So while others in Harpers Ferry were suffering from slow recovery due to the Civil War, a financial crisis in 1873, frequent flooding, and other industrial, economic, and natural forces, farming began to regain its prosperity. By 1870, farm acreage consisted of 68 percent of Jefferson County's land area and the county's farmland was in the top four most productive in West Virginia (51). In addition, 42% of all jobs listed in the 1870 census were related to agriculture and farming (Porter 2011:14). It was also during this time that Jefferson County became one of the most active sites of Grange activity. The Granger movement was an agrarian program initiated by the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, which was founded in 1867 for social and educational purposes but later became involved in political causes to advocate on behalf of farmers and protest unfair labor practices (Shirley 1933).

The late nineteenth century was also marked by increased specialization in agriculture. The Shenandoah Valley was known for its beef cattle, sheep, swine, wheat, and corn production, and farmers were increasingly adding orchards to their properties. In fact, the Shenandoah Valley became known as one of the most important fruit-growing regions in the eastern United States (National Park Service 2005:54).

At this time the Standard Lime and Stone Company became involved in agricultural activity. The company purchased several hundred acres of farmland in the Engle, Millville, and Bakerton areas to be used for future quarrying. The Baker family leased much of this land to tenant farmers or local farm owners to ensure that it would remain in good condition until it was used for quarrying. In addition, by cultivating the land, the company would make a profit on the property while it awaited industrial use (Theriault 2009:173).

By 1900, commerce and industry began to regain their footing and were becoming more prosperous, while the agricultural boom began to slow. Between 1880 and 1900, the Census shows a decline from 20% to 5% of people reporting agriculture as their occupation (Porter 2011:45). An increasing number of people were taking jobs in service, transportation, food, labor, and tourism. An article by J.F. Engle in the January 15, 1901 issue of the *Spirit of Jefferson* shows that while farming was not exactly declining rapidly, it was at least static or not quite in the golden era of the previous century:

The year of 1900 brought to the people of Jefferson county a reasonable share of the prosperity which has been so widely spoken of over the country. A healthy condition prevailed in all industries and there were very few failures. The farmers had a bountiful wheat crop, being over the average, but the hay and corn crops were very short in some sections of the county, especially the hay crop, which was almost a failure. This was due to the dry season in the early spring. The young grass which was sown and should have matured this year was also greatly injured by the dry weather. The apple crop, which was so abundant last year, was almost an entire failure this year, but this was somewhat compensated for by a better peach crop and by a crop of the smaller fruits, such as berries, grapes and cherries. The early potato crop was fairly good but the late one was a failure, and the price of potatoes has ranged much higher than last year.

The price of farm lands, as compared with the year 1899, has remained substantially the same and good farms have been in demand and brought good prices, ranging from \$60 to \$75. Less desirable and productive lands have brought \$40 and upward per acre. There has not been as strong a demand for loans on farm lands, and while the legal rate is 6 per cent, in a large majority of cases loans were made during this year on farms at 5 per cent, showing that money is more easily obtained and that farms are the most desirable security for money-lenders. There has not been as much money invested from other States as formerly on account of the lack of demand, and lenders from other States almost invariably require farms as security, declining to lend in most instances on town property. A number of farmers have made substantial improvements, building new barns or dwellings or making substantial repairs.

By contrast, an article in a 1904 issue of *Farmers Advocate* touted the wonderful environment and opportunities available to farmers in Jefferson County, stating:

Compared with the productiveness in grain and stock the prices at the present time for Jefferson county farm land is indeed low. No country offers a better investment, for in the last ten years there has been a substantial increase of from \$5 to \$10 per acre, and in many instances greater than this. Such a thing as a total failure of crops is unknown, and it is rare that they fall below the average. Droughts are not frequent, and when they do occur not more than one cereal out of the whole crop is injured.

Any thrifty farmer with half the value of a farm in cash at their present low prices can buy the same and easily in a few years produce enough to pay the remainder. So, visit the Shenandoah Valley, examine the full granaries and stock sheds of its farmers, become informed of the value of its lands and their opportunities, and the conclusion will be reached that Jefferson county's advantages have not all been told, for in its mineral and agricultural development there abounds untold wealth, secure investments; and with its people a hospitality generous, warm-hearted and sincere.

One area in which Jefferson County's farmers continued to prosper was with fruit orchards. Orchards became increasingly part of the farm landscape in the early twentieth century, aided in part by the railroad system, as this passage from the same *Farmers Advocate* article suggests:

The best proofs of the importance of this section as a successful fruit growing region has recently been furnished by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, and consists in the addition of a fruit train to their regular service and which, collecting up at the various stations along their road every day all fruit for shipment, send them through without delay to the New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore markets. Of the various fruits grown in Jefferson county the most successful pursuit is that of apple culture of the winter variety, which include Ben Davis, York Imperial, Wine Saps and others. Large bodies of fine farmland are planted in orchards, and each year the acreage is constantly increasing, reaching within the last five years an increase of 500 per cent. Pears, peaches, grapes and small fruits grow readily and are profitably marketed.

A pamphlet published by the B&O Railroad touted the counties of the Eastern Panhandle as "apple country," "noted for their great commercial apple orchards which annually produce large quantities of delicious fruit for national markets. Springtime brings gay, new colors to the orchards. . . . Many highways and byways leading to principal points of interest in the Panhandle are lined for miles by acres of blossom-laden trees." When we interviewed Mike Jenkins, whose father worked as a tenant farmer on farms around Jefferson County, he recalled how his family took advantage of the prevalence of apple orchards in the mid-twentieth century:

Another area that park has now is the Perry Orchard which is, again, right across the street from the Ott farm. We probably picked up apples there, on occasion or two in the early years, 'cause one of the family traditions we had was making apple butter. So I mean, for almost twenty years we made apple butter. Vontella Meadows, which lived right there along Bakerton Road, we made apple butter with her a couple times, made apple butter at my grandmother's place a couple times and then we made apple butter at our place on the mountain several times until we started doing more craft fairs, and then we actually got to making apple butter every weekend for probably the course of ten years or better. So that's something you won't see in Jefferson

County much anymore. . . . There used to be a lot of apple orchards and there just aren't a lot of apple orchards anymore, but so like I say, farming traditions, we carry the apple butter tradition along from the farm that dad had, made apple butter with some of the local community, not necessarily a whole lot but some.

As Jenkins indicated in his comments, farming continued to be a family activity throughout the twentieth century. Farmers sometimes hired additional laborers to assist during busy times, but primarily relied on family members to take on the various tasks that needed to be completed. Shirley Eagan noted that throughout this period, “the farm couple were usually seen as equal partners in business, with the husband directing the farm operations and the wife managing the home” (Eagan 1990). Children were also assigned tasks based on gender: girls helped with cooking, cleaning, and laundry, while boys helped with farm work and maintained the wood or coal supply.

Russell Roper recalled in a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff how the members of his family tended to different aspects of his father’s farm:

My father was a dairy farmer, and we lived on a farm on Summit Point Road, which I still own. I milked cows. I had a peach orchard on the farm. I had a little apple orchard on the farm, a grape orchard on the farm, and a raspberry orchard on the farm. My mother raised chickens, sold eggs, and did all the farm work that a woman was supposed to do as far as the farm was concerned. I continued farming after I got out of the service for a length of time. In fact, they traded the—didn't trade but sold the milk cows and got dairy cows and got rid of the—sold the dairy cows in fact. Let me retract that. I sold the dairy cows and bought beef cows. And then I went into the hog business on that same farm while we was doing construction work, and we would raise six to seven—we had six to seven hundred head of hogs per day, not the year, but per day. And I stopped raising hogs in about '95, 1995.

Locke Wysong also described how farming was a family business in his interview with us:

Megan Bailey: So, when you were growing up, did you help out on the farms?

Locke Wysong: Oh yeah, when I was in school. As soon as I graduated high school, I went to service. When I came back, you know, I helped around until I got myself a job, had to make a living. Then after my dad had his health problems, I had at that time two brothers and we kind of formed a partnership and took over the farm. We raised beef cattle and hogs, and then we made all of our crops that we raised went toward very little, but it was cash crop.

In the 1920s, efforts were made to better understand and educate the wives of farmers, especially through the rise of women’s clubs. Mountain Echo, the quarterly publication of the Harpers Ferry Women’s Club, published an article in 1921 urging “Farmers’ Wives and other Wives” to attend “Farmers’ Week” at West Virginia University in Morgantown. The article reported that the most recent event had had a women’s meeting with educational sessions devoted to making one’s own dress form, the use of milk-and-cheese dishes, and a demonstration of electrical equipment, range, cleaner, and churn. Participants also enjoyed activities such as lectures on topics such as the Farmer’s Loan Bill, live music performances, and social events and mixers. About five hundred people attended the event, “most of them men of course,” but the Federation of Women’s Clubs was represented there, with Harpers Ferry having the largest membership in their local club. At this meeting, the women involved formed a Loan Club for farm girls interested in pursuing Home Economics.

Five years later, the General Federation of Women's Clubs' (GFWC) would survey 889 farm homes in West Virginia. They identified a trend among the women of making kitchen improvements in order to work more efficiently and to make chores easier. Subsequently, the Department of Agriculture published a bulletin



addressing the wives of farmers, advising them to, "Group all equipment large and small into compact work centers for preparation of raw food, cooking, serving, clearing away, and dish washing and any other activities done regularly in the kitchen" (Eagan 1990).

Farmer's Wife, a monthly women's magazine, had been in circulation since 1897 and provided advice on farming, cooking, and housekeeping. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the magazine sponsored the Master Farm Homemaker Awards Program in cooperation with the Agriculture Extension Service to recognize those women who had done an exceptional job regarding the farmstead, home management, health and living habits of the family, recreation, social development and family relationships, and community work (Eagan 1990). The magazine noted that the farmer's wife had many duties, including raising chickens, canning, gardening, butchering, picking apples, making apple butter and soap, sewing linens, house cleaning in spring and fall, and helping with special farming activities such as threshing, haying and filling the silo.

While the onset of the Depression had devastating effects for many in Harpers Ferry, farm families tended to be less affected. According to the 1930 Census, most industries were stagnant or declining while jobs in agriculture nearly tripled compared to 1920 (Porter 2011:111). The small-scale agriculture practiced by farm families enabled them to have a steady food supply and remain self-sufficient. For this reason, transients often targeted farms looking for food and shelter (ibid.). In a 2013 interview with Elaine Eff, Russell Roper commented on how farming made his family self-sufficient:

I went to college on the G.I. Bill because all the other guys say, "Well, man, I'm going to school. I've already been in the service. I spent my time. I did this. I fought in World War II. So, this is my reward. So, I might as well take advantage of it." That's all. And I still helped my daddy on the farm. I mean, you know, some days, I didn't have a full schedule, and I had to go to the library to do this or do that. I got all my lessons, and I did this. I mean, I passed all my subjects, and I just took a business course because that's what I was interested in. I was interested in business because my father, he did not only farm, but he had investments. My father had investments in different places. He raised stuff to sell. He sold apples and peaches and grapes and all this stuff to these downtown stores here. Regardless of all of that, he sold hams and all that, and my mother sold eggs. My mother had five or six hundred chickens, and she sold eggs commercially. They'd come and pick up the eggs on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. So, you know, we just didn't live on the farm just to live on the farm. My daddy lived on the farm to make whatever money there was to be made, and we was independent. I'll put it like that.

Farming continues to this day, though farms are becoming smaller or more consolidated. Horse farms that specialize in breeding thoroughbreds are increasingly popular due to the proximity of the Charles Town Racetrack. Jane Tabb told us in an interview that there is a benefit in participating in horse breeding because "there's a bonus that you receive if your animal is West Virginia-bred and gets in the money at the racetrack so a lot of folks brings their mares in here to foal and all." Tabb also observed that a lot of smaller farms are going into vegetable production to meet the demand of two new farmers markets in Shepherdstown and Charles Town. Cattle farming and the cultivation of corn, soybeans, and wheat remain common in the Harpers Ferry area. In other ways, however, agriculture looks quite different in the twenty-first century. First, farming is no longer necessarily a full-time job. In some cases it is a hobby, and for others it does not bring in enough revenue and supplementary work is needed. Locke Wysong illustrated this point in our interview:

Megan Bailey: So what was the other job you were doing, aside from helping out with farming?

Locke Wysong: I worked with the federal government.

MB: Oh! OK.

LW: Firefighter 34 years.

MB: Oh wow!

LW: But like I say, my brothers and I formed a partnership, all of our spare time was on the farm. We all three had other jobs. What do they call us, weekend farmer, holiday farmers... Didn't seem like it sometimes. You had all this work to do. Anyway, so we sold out and went our separate ways.

Farmers have also had to contend with the declining profitability and demand for certain traditional agricultural products, and the rising popularity of other commodities. For example, dairy farming was once a mainstay in and around Harpers Ferry, but dairy farms are disappearing to be replaced with other, more lucrative industries. Locke Wysong commented on this in our interview with him:

Megan Bailey: And nowadays, the farmers around here--is there a lot of cattle or dairy farming or--What do you see?

Locke Wysong: No. Not too much anymore there, I think there's only about 10 dairy farms in the county anymore; used to be just about everybody was milking in those days.

MB: Why do you think that happened, that not so many people are--?

LW: Well, one thing was labor. And the guys that are in the dairy business now, they're pretty good size operations. Some of the people I know that went out of the dairy business were, you know, getting on in age and they didn't have any help to do the milking and all the other workers were connected to dairy farms, you know. It's just one of those things that happens.

MB: Is it hard nowadays to get people, to hire people to work on farms?

LW: Well, I hate to... give you my opinion.

MB: No! I welcome it. I'm curious.

LW: I'm sure people want--if you said you had work for them, they'd come but if they want the dollar of an executive which is not affordable for a farmer and when they find out what the hours are which is not an 8 to 5 job but could be seven til whenever.

When asked about changes in farming she had seen over the years, Jane Tabb also observed a decline in dairy farming and attributed it to a lack of labor:

Well, you know, Cam's, my husband's family, milked cows for a number of years and when we decided to sell out it was a tough decision, but that's one thing. There used to be fifty dairy cows in Jefferson County, there's probably ten left. It's a tough business right now and, ya know, the handwriting is on the walls that dairy farms are gonna be like the mega-farms now with at least a thousand cows like in Florida and California, stuff like that. Cheap labor, that's what killed us too. There are a few farms that are still going. They're either using all family labor and they have large families or Hispanics, and it's a tough labor market for that type of labor especially when we were milking cows and the building boom was going. They could go anywhere and work construction so that's more than we can. So yeah, that's been a big change...

Along with dairy farming, the Harpers Ferry area has seen a decrease in land set aside for orchards. While Jefferson County was once touted as "apple country," apple and other fruit orchards area much less common now. Locke Wysong attributed this change to development in the area:

Locke Wysong: Yeah, that was all farmland back in the day. Where Wal-Mart is and all those [on Route 340 in Charles Town], that was all farms; orchards or farms.

Megan Bailey: What were the orchards, what kind of fruit?

LW: Mostly apples. Predominantly apples.

MB: Are there any orchards left in this area?

LW: There are a few, and they're more or less like an operation that we have here, seasonal, where you sell your produce right off a stand or you know, something like we're doing. There are a couple pretty good size orchards left, but I don't know all that much about it, how they're doing or whatever.

Jane Tabb also noticed the decline in the number of orchards, and noted that the remaining orchards are increasingly reserved for pick-your-own activities for residents and tourists, while produce-related manufacturing has been relocated elsewhere:

Well, that's another change, that's another change is there used to be a lot of orchards and they've--they were, you know, they were being sold for developers and that's another tough industry that they say, you know, they can make apple juice cheaper, we can ship our apples to China and they can make apple juice cheaper or they can grow apples cheaper than here.

While farming is a way of life, it is also a business, so farmers must constantly adapt and change and diversify their offerings in order to survive economically. Shepherd Ogden, head of the Jefferson County Agriculture Development Office, held a series of public meetings in 2013 targeted toward commodity grain farmers in the local area. When asked how they envisioned the county's farms in 2035, participants said that "farms would be smaller and crops would be more diverse. And, crops would have more value" (Pisciotta 2013). This diversification can already be seen in farms across the county. One way that farms are increasing potential uses and products is through agro-tourism: using farm resources to draw tourists and bring extra income to farms. For example, some farms advertise "pick-your-own" fruits and vegetables. In addition, Twin Ridge Upland Bird Farm in Shenandoah Junction is a 300-acre farm that was originally an apple orchard but has downsized to be converted into grounds to hunt quail, pheasant, and other birds. Other farmers in the county use parts of their farmland to grow and sell Christmas trees, and some rent out their barns for special events (Pisciotta 2013). Jane Tabb provided additional examples of agro-tourism in our interview with her:

Well, I call agro-tourism another way we have... You know, some horse farms are made for riding lessons, and you can come in, you can do your kids parties and pony rides, things like that. You know, my brother-in-law has a pumpkin patch every fall. You know, you can go through the corn maze, you can pick up your pumpkins in the field, you know, you can play on the straw bales, those types of things.

The Tabb farm is perhaps the best example of the ways in which farmers are moving toward increasing diversification. The Tabb family is involved in multiple projects and businesses, which Jane Tabb described during our interview:

Jane Tabb: We have about a 500 head beef cattle farm plus all the crops--corn wheat, soy beans, hay and then we also have a woodwork recycling enterprise. This is kinda unique, made out of--we take--I don't know if you know what roll-off boxes are in the back of big trucks, you see 'em. Waste collars you see a lot. Of course we have a racetrack and a lot of horse stables here, so we drop a roll-off box [an open top dumpster] there and they put their soil bedding in that and we bring it back home to the farm and compost it and then we use that as--we use about 95% of it as fertilizer in our own fields and sell some to the public, that's what it started out as, and then after we sold the dairy cows and construction was going crazy around here we would drop a box at a construction site and they would put the clean lumber scraps in that. We were lower than Waste Management so that's how we got in the door, and we bring that back to the farm and grind that up and sell

that as stable bedding. The horsemen love it, it's coarser than sawdust and straw's getting very hard to find here so we sell them the stable bedding and then also when they were--lot of places where they were clearing land for subdivisions, we would take the trees and the stumps, bring those back, grind them up, sell them for mulch, and then we discovered out of all these stumps we were amassing a lot of dirt so we bought another machine that's a big sifter. We sell topsoil and none of it's off the farm so--

Megan Bailey: OK, wow.

JT: Yeah, and it's really--if you think about it--it's really full circle.

Tabb also established a quasi-catering business, Fresh Feast on the Farm, in 2007. Her intention was to organize dining events that link the local community with agriculture. She prepares meals that highlight locally produced foods, such as beef from her own farm and pork, fruits, and vegetables from farms in Charles Town, Summit Point, Middleway, and others in the area. Each dining event is held at a different farm in Jefferson County (Pisciotta 2013). As she explained it in our interview:

That's my business which I don't make any money at but I just do it because I like to do it. Once or twice a year I have an event at a farm and it's usually in a tent or in a farm building and it's only fresh and local food and it's--you know, we do--I try to make it as fancy as I can, white tablecloth, all that, charge a good price for it, but another way to focus on the local food and, and not that we raise any of that; I mean, ours is all in the beef but it's really changed, ya know, in the last fifteen years to--it's become a critical mass. So you can feed sixty people with local food. That's about as many as I can cook for by myself and I always have a nonprofit that gets some of the benefit, you know, and they're my volunteer wait staff.

The Tabbs also pioneered composting as a way to adapt to a new agricultural landscape and make changes to sustain their farmland. In the 1990s, Jane Tabb and her husband, Lyle “Cam” Tabb, began a composting business for added income and to provide natural fertilizer for their land. Since then, they have expanded their operation to own three trucks that they use to collect manure from horse farms, which is brought back to their farm for composing. They also collect pallets and lumber from construction sites, which they grind down and sell as animal bedding. In addition, they collect material from areas where trees and stumps are being cleared, which supplements the compost. In more recent years, the Tabbs have been working with the food service department of the Veteran’s Administration Medical Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia, to reduce food waste and encourage composting. Each week the Tabbs collect hundreds of pounds of leftover food scraps from the hospital and turn it into compost. They use the compost for their own farm, and also sell it to others as “a way to diversify our cash flow,” says Jane Tabb.

In spite of their efforts to sustain a farm, it can be difficult for a family to do so if later generations lack an interest in the family business. One local resident attributed the decline of farming to this fact, saying that the current generation has abandoned farming. In our interview with Jane Tabb, she noted how a reliance on one’s progeny to perpetuate a business puts family farms in a precarious position:

Most of the other farms are handed down generation to generation. I would say the majority. But then there are some that have been sold. We know we're very fortunate. My husband's 67 and our eldest son's on the farm and interested and committed, and we have another son that may come back to the farm, it just depends on whether his life--and it has to be their choice or it doesn't work. We've seen that. But there's some other farmers that don't have that so, you know, you have to--it's a tough decision.

Locke Wysong is one of the fortunate ones, in that his adult children are interested in working the farm he purchased eleven years ago:

Locke Wysong: Well, my son and daughter this year, well, for the last couple of years, they've been experimenting with trying to grow produce to sell to the public, and this year they decided they needed to start generating some income from it, so that's what we've done. So far I think they're doing pretty well from what I understand. Hopefully that'll be an ongoing thing down the road. It is pretty labor intensive [laughs].

Megan Bailey: Is this their full-time job or do they have other jobs?

LW: No, no, they both have other jobs. My daughter works in the school system, now she's out until school starts and my son is in the insurance business so he has appointments all pretty regular but she spends almost all her time here.

Wysong assists his children with the farming:

LW: This is an endeavor that they want to undertake. I'm just here to help.

MB: OK [laughs].

LW: I'm the hired hand...

MB: Well where did they learn how to do that? Were they learning from you or--

LW: Well, they picked up from different--They didn't learn any of this produce stuff from me, I was never in that but they picked up from different people they know that have an interest in doing that kind of stuff and [Cooperative] Extension all those types of people.

MB: OK.

LW: 'Course they were involved in 4-H from the time they were kids.

MB: Oh really?

LW: They've had farming in their background even though they've never lived on a farm.

Another threat to the survival of local farms is the rise of development in the Harpers Ferry area. Developers have been purchasing farmland and reselling it as subdivisions to newcomers, largely commuters from the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan region who are in search of less expensive real estate, as well as retirees and second-home buyers (National Park Service 2005:20). Local residents like Locke Wysong point to the area along Route 340 as the most drastically developed in recent decades:

Locke Wysong: Well, yeah, back when I was growing up, Jefferson County was predominantly agriculture. You were neighbors, all your neighbors were farmers so you interacted with them to a certain degree but things have changed in my time [laughs]. Yeah. When we were, when I was growing up, where I lived was considered country. Now the town's building around.

Megan Bailey: Yeah, I've seen, I've been seeing some, I don't know how recent they are but some of the developments--as I was driving down 340, some of the developments along there—

LW: Yeah, that was all farmland back in the day. Where Wal-Mart is and all those, that was all farms; orchards or farms.

Residents of Harpers Ferry noted a couple of different development booms in Harpers Ferry's recent history, the first one occurring in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Locke Wysong:

Locke Wysong: Before that, they were still being sold for farmland but, you know, the housing industry went booming and the price of everything go up, so of course that made the land price go up, so...

Megan Bailey: Yeah.

LW: That's when people, mostly the older people who couldn't do it any longer, their property is their retirement, so they had to get the best price they could.

Residents observed another spike in development in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In our interview with Jane Tabb, she described the most recent development activity and her intimate familiarity with its progress due to her role as a Jefferson County Commissioner:

Well, not so much in recent years but during the boom from like 2000 to 2008. Well, this whole complex wasn't here, you know, both sides, the housing development over there, all this was founded in that time, just a lot of subdivisions went up and I actually have over 20,000 lots already, still plotted, but not built on, we are planning on zoning it, so you know we still, we just haven't done it because the economy's not been right for it, so, and they're finishing up in that one subdivision right across the road, I mean, it started and the bottom fell out so, and that really impacted us.

According to Locke Wysong, some of the undeveloped land purchased by developers remains in agricultural use for the time being:

Locke Wysong: Well, right now there's no development going on so they're renting it to different farmers to raise crops on but just like the place that we have, that we sold, it was to a developer, but nothing's been built on it, it's just being cropped by another farmer, renting it...

Megan Bailey: What kinds of crops?

LW: Corn, soybeans, wheat, things like that. Those type of guys, that's what they raise. All cash crops.

Jane Tabb has conflicting feelings about the development of farmland, given her unique position as both a farmer and a County Commissioner. She told us, "I hate seeing farmland gobbled up but as a County Commissioner I realize we have to have a viable tax base, you know," and went on to say:

I think a lot of people move here and they value the vistas and part of that is not only the beautiful views from places like Harpers Ferry and so forth but I just love looking at a cornfield. I know probably somebody that has built a subdivision thinking that's a thing of beauty too and it is in its own way but I value the land [laughs] but, you know, I know people need a place to live and all that good stuff too.

Tabb explained that in response to seeing farmland "gobbled up," she began volunteering at an annual event called Farm Day, an effort on her part to help "farmers and residents of new subdivisions to understand how they could be good neighbors to one another" (Smith 2015). Begun in 2002, Jefferson County Farm Day is a self-guided tour that showcases local farms and helps educate the public about farms, farmland, and farmers. Tabb told us that she hopes the event will counteract the pace of development in the area, saying, "you know, if we support our little farms, they won't be selling."

## Farmland and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

One cannot discuss farmland around Harpers Ferry without referencing the park in some way, either because the park has acquired a good deal of historic farmland or because it has a legal relationship with local farmers who maintain the agricultural use of the park's farmland. Following its last few expansions, the park acquired a number of parcels that could be farmed. The park issues Special Use Permits to local farmers, who pay a fee to plant and harvest approved crops (e.g. hay) on the land and perform work in kind, typically mowing the park's open fields (Wong 2010:23). In this way, land maintains its traditional agricultural use,

battle sites are maintained as open spaces, and the NPS gains access to a fleet of tractors to mow their fields (ibid.).

The Tabb family leases 156 acres of land from the park, which they actively farm. We spoke to Jane Tabb about the benefits and challenges of this particular relationship with the National Park Service:

Well, the one place that we had, the Park Service had taken it over and they hadn't developed it yet, see, so we were—it's cheaper to let us use the land...so that's how we got in on the door on that. We were doing that, and then it was sold and it wasn't our property, it was sold to the Park Service and then we were able to do that. And then Murphy Farm, we just make hay off of that, and--I can't ever think of the right name--it's not at the main park area where a lot of folks are but the one that's off by what used to be Wilt's Fruit Market down that road, I can't think of the name of the road [Millville Road]. We farm that part, and then for years we put corn or soy beans in that, and then when they started developing that part, they wanted it so people could see, so it's hay grass now. You know, there's some challenges working with them because they want to cut trails through our fields and don't always tell us, you know, those things. And we have to only use approved pesticides and stuff, yeah.

MB: I see.

JT: And the other thing we do that started, I don't know, three or four years ago, is there was a Park Service employee that took the Leadership Jefferson which was put on by the Chamber of Commerce. It's a class and I do the [agricultural] module every year and I organize that for the class and they came and visited our farm as part of that. Well, they now rent our boxes to take care of all the debris and you know, we've had a lot of storms last couple winters so, you know, instead of them having piles and I don't know what they ever do with it--because I wouldn't think they'd burn it on property, you know, we haul it away. I think it's only mulch and stuff like that, so.

MB: OK. And so, how often do you have to interact with the park, just as far as that relationship is concerned?

JT: OK, you know, the crop stuff, that's just yearly renewal; say, after all your paperwork and we need to update that and all. The boxes, we do all that by credit card so I'm not involved with the billing of it but I think, ya know, I guess depending on the year, the time of the year, ya know, a couple boxes a month.

In our interview with Tom Shelton, he observed how the park's acquisition of farmland was beneficial because it protected the area from further development:

But it's like anyplace now, these housing developments, you know, we got housing developments going on out here. And a lot of people were mad about the housing developments and whatever that came in. It didn't bother me because I understood the side of the Park Service keeping the ground, historical ground, you know. And that way, you know, I try to explain that to some of the people around. "Yeah, but they takin' away this land." I said people are donating their property. I said – now, I wouldn't donate mine, but – and they tried. Just like where Homeland Security is, that was one big farm, and across the road, that was another big farm, but the older, the mom and dad of both sides of the family, well, their kids, once they started getting up in age, their kids started fighting over property, so we heard. And so the parents just said, hey, I'm gonna end this battle and we'll give it to the Park Service for whatever amount of money and you'll live off of whatever the Park Service gives you. And that's what a lot of people were carrying on about. But also it serves as the old part of town because you don't have those housing developments right up on you. And this way if Murphy Farm was developed, they'd have to put another road down in there, because they were talking about another fifty to one hundred town houses or whatever and with all that, you got two people driving the car and then you have teenage kids. So, you know, that stopped that for us around here.

The Murphy Farm he mentioned is a historic farm that is now a property associated with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The farm consists of multiple parcels of land that total 97.95 acres of agricultural fields and deciduous forest overlooking the Shenandoah River. The National Park Service acquired the land in 2002, but before that there was a series of owners. It was initially owned by the Virginia

Company of London after the founding of Jamestown, and then passed to Lord Thomas Culpeper in 1688 and Lord Fairfax in 1690 (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:35). It had several more owners but farming activity most likely took place after armory worker Edmund H. Chambers purchased the property in 1848 (37). The September 1862 Battle of Bolivar Heights took place in part on the Murphy Farm when Confederate troops maneuvered over the land; today there remain earthen fortifications from the event. The battle and other military activity resulted in massive devastation that left the farm ruined and uninhabitable. Chambers and his family were forced to abandon the farm in 1862 and did not return until 1865, when he saw that most of his property – 50½ acres of land, a 1½ story house, a stable, granary, several outbuildings, 500 fruit trees, wheat, and fencing—had been damaged or destroyed (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:40). His family moved to the town of Bolivar and it is not known whether he continued to farm the land. In 1869, Alexander Murphy acquired the property and expanded its boundaries. Murphy sold five acres of his land to journalist Kate Field so she could reconstruct the John Brown Fort, which “became a pilgrimage site for African Americans and attracted many people who wished to pay homage to the ideals of John Brown” (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:xix) [see Figure 54]. Attendees of the 1906 meeting of the Niagara Movement walked from Storer College to the Fort where they engaged in prayer and song to commemorate John Brown’s raid and abolitionism.



**Figure 54. Members of the National League of Colored Women, who made a pilgrimage to John Brown's Fort on July 14, 1896. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-599).**

After Field died, Murphy continued to operate the fort as a tourist attraction, and hired a caretaker to deal with the damage and littering done by visitors, though this proved to be too much upkeep and by 1903 the fort was being used to store wheat (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:61). Though the fort was eventually purchased by Storer College and moved to their campus, the Murphys recognized the important historical events that happened on their farm and installed a plaque at the location of the fort. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Murphy added approximately fifty acres of land along the western edge of the farm



(Hassler and Ebersole 2014:64). The farm stayed in the Murphy family until 2001 when one of Alexander Murphy's descendants, Josephine Murphy Kuhn Curtis, sold the property to Curtis WVA, LLC, an investment company managed by her husband (Hassler and Ebersole 2014:65). The company proposed a 189-home housing development called Murphy's Landing. This proposal incited a great deal of controversy, particularly from the preservation community who wanted to protect the historic farm. Even Josephine Curtis was not thrilled with the idea; former park superintendent Don Campbell suggested that the proposed development was "the result of twelve years of family frustration in attempting to find a buyer for the farm in hopes of preserving its extraordinary history." Jane Tabb also suggested during our interview that the Murphy family would have preferred to preserve the farm:

Megan Bailey: OK, and the Murphy Farm that you mention, do you know--can you tell me anything about the family that owned that before?

Jane Tabb: Well, of course there was a big brouhaha. Do you know about that?

MB: No.

JT: OK. Well, the Murphy family and I don't know all the names--my husband knew them very well--they realized that that was a national treasure. They wanted to sell it to the Park Service and...they couldn't get the price they wanted, or the Parks Service wouldn't move. Of course I know that takes federal appropriation, that takes time, so they finally decided--of course, the eldest son that was managing it all, he had cancer and he decided, well, we're gonna go through planning and zoning, we're gonna develop it if they're not gonna buy it and I think they didn't really want to do that, but that was the push to get the Park Service to do something--

MB: OK.

JT: --to get their act together, and say, "It's gonna be gone unless you do something," and that's how it was done, he had cancer and he wanted to make sure it was done before he was gone.



**Figure 55. The Murphy Farm, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

Eventually, the Trust for Public Land announced that it would be purchasing the property in order to turn it over to the park, and the proposed development did not go through (McMillion 2002). The Trust obtained the property in 2002 and transferred it to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park [see Figure 55].

The Allstadt Farm is another historic farm property that is currently managed by the National Park Service. At its peak it comprised 672 acres; the

park owns 267.46 acres of the original property. In addition, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection,

Department of Homeland Security, administers a firearms training center on sixty acres of the former farm (National Park Service 2005:2). Originally owned by Lord Fairfax and sold to eastern Virginia land speculators, the property was leased to tenant farmers before it was sold to settlers from southeastern Pennsylvania (National Park Service 2005:20). The Allstadts, like many others in this region, were of Pennsylvania German ancestry and had migrated south to find fertile land for inexpensive prices. Brothers John, Jacob, and Daniel Allstadt moved from Berks County, Pennsylvania to Jefferson County and acquired 296 acres of farmland in 1792 (Johnson 1994:5). John eventually deeded his portion to his brothers, who continued to farm the land. The Allstadts cultivated wheat, rye, corn, oats, clover hay, flax seed, and millet seed and raised horses, cattle, dairy cows, hogs, sheep, and geese (6). Jacob owned fourteen slaves while Daniel owned eight; this was an unusually large number of slaves for Pennsylvania Germans in the Shenandoah Valley, as they usually had family-operated farms, but their ownership of slaves illustrates how farms during that period were shifting from small operations to large commercial enterprises (National Park Service 2005:40). In 1860 the average farm size in Jefferson County was 237 acres; the Allstadts had nearly three times that amount with 672 acres and more than three times the average number of slaves (National Park Service 2005:93). They expanded their holdings and eventually owned approximately 800 acres between the Shenandoah River and the Charles Town-Harpers Ferry Turnpike (Griffith 2003:3). Following the death of Jacob and Daniel, the land was partitioned and distributed to Daniel's three children. His son, John Hall Allstadt, continued to farm his portion of the land until the end of the Civil War when he built a new house on the turnpike and began renting out his farm in 1872. He owned thirteen slaves, most of whom were likely involved with agricultural occupations (Johnson 1995:8). John Hall Allstadt continued to expand his property until his death in 1888, though he did not live on the farm again (Johnson 1995:12). The land was eventually divided among his two children and three grandchildren. It was bought, sold, divided, and re-divided several times throughout the turn of the nineteenth century. In addition to farming, the land was thought to be valuable for its mineral contents. In 1903, Susan Allstadt Henkle signed a lease with Metropolitan Oil, Coal, and Gas Company to allow the company to prospect for minerals on her property, though it seems that nothing was ever discovered and no extraction took place (Griffith 2003:21). Henkle also signed agreements with T.M. Keyser and G.W. Johnson allowing them to quarry a portion of her land, though it does not seem like any quarrying actually took place (Griffith 2003:22). Part of the land on the west side of Bloomery Road was sold to Standard Lime and Stone Company in 1905, 1908, and 1913 (*ibid.*). After Henkle died in 1920, her son Charles sold the Allstadt/Henkle farm to Standard Lime and Stone Company, who constructed workers' housing there. The 92-acre parcel of land where the Allstadt House and Ordinary were built experienced a number of ownership changes during the twentieth century (National Park Service 2005:58). In 2004 the National Park Service acquired approximately 267 acres of the historic Allstadt Farm, which now includes part of the Standard Lime and Stone Company's former holdings. The property is interpreted as School House Ridge South, which speaks to its role in the 1862 Civil War battle, though it remains in agricultural use today. A local farmer has leased the land since at least 1992 and uses approximately 124 acres of it to grow crops (National Park Service 2005:96).

School House Ridge North is a 304-acre property composed mostly of farmland. It has been owned and managed by the National Park Service since 2004 and has seen almost continuous agricultural use since

1780. Located two miles west of Harpers Ferry and bordered by US Route 340 to the south, the property measures about 304 acres and was once composed of farms owned by the Ott, Moler, Rau, and Fritts families. Like the properties described above, this farmland was originally owned by Lord Fairfax who granted land to settlers in the second half of the eighteenth century (National Park Service 2008:26). Among them was George Moler, who had moved to Virginia from Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1758 (ibid.). In 1784 he received a land grant from Lord Fairfax for 297 acres of land and began farming a rotating set of crops including corn, oats, barley, wheat, clover, and grass, a common practice among southeastern Pennsylvanians. The farm remained in the Moler family, with each generation continuing to practice diversified farming, growing a variety of crops such as hay, straw, wheat, corn, and potatoes, and keeping livestock such as horses, cows, and hogs (National Park Service 2008:31). The family also owned as many as ten slaves. During the Civil War, the farmland was devastated by military activity, including the Battle of Harpers Ferry, which took place on September 12-15, 1862. The owner at the time, John Moler, estimated that Union troops removed 1,050 bushels of corn, 150 bushels of potatoes and six hogs from his farm and fields (National Park Service 2008:45). He also lost four tons of hay, twenty tons of straw, and four horses during the war (ibid.). However, his house and barn remained intact. In 1876, Randolph Rau purchased a portion of the Moler farmland, a 266-acre property known as Prospect Hill Farm, and eventually purchased the rest of the Moler property (National Park Service 2008:52). The Fritts family, who ran a successful dairy enterprise, owned the southern portion of School House Ridge North. John Fritts kept horses, hogs, and sheep in addition to his dairy cattle, and cultivated corn and wheat (National Park Service 2008:55). He also employed at least twenty people and contracted trucks to transport coal from Romney to the local towns and schools, and rented out mowing, threshing, and baling services to neighboring farmers (ibid.). Following his death in 1943, the eastern portion of the Fritts Farm went to his son Robert Fritts and the other portion, which contained the dairy barn, went to his daughter and son-in-law, Blanche and Elmer Ott (National Park Service 2008:58). The Otts continued to operate the dairy farm until increasingly strict dairy regulations made it too expensive, and they converted their operation to beef farming (National Park Service 2008:59). Blanche Ott sold the southwest corner of the farm, which eventually became the location of Shipley Elementary School (National Park Service 2008:60). The beef farm continued to operate until the death of Elmer Ott in 2002. The property was transferred to the National Park Service in 2003, and the buildings have since been removed. In 2004, the National Park Service purchased an additional 70 acres of Ott farmland with the assistance of the Trust for Public Land. In its preserved state with the National Park Service, the property is interpreted to the Civil War period and specifically the Battle of Harpers Ferry; however, the fields of School House Ridge North have remained, as the National Park Service issues agricultural use permits to local farmers. The farmers cultivate the land with an annual crop rotation of corn, wheat, hay, or soy (ibid.).

## **Black Advocacy Organizations and Leaders**

Due to its connections to John Brown's raid and its significance to the abolitionist movement, Harpers Ferry has drawn leaders and members of civil rights organizations for over a century. It was the support and promotion by black activists that helped Harpers Ferry become a national shrine to the

abolitionist movement. Since the late 1800s, John Brown's fort has been regarded as a symbol of freedom by some African Americans. Frederick Douglass visited Storer College in 1881 and gave a speech praising Brown and those who participated in the raid and sacrificed in the name of liberation for slaves. In 1896, the National League of Colored Women made a pilgrimage to John Brown's fort, which was regarded as a symbol of struggle and as hallowed ground. W. E. B.

DuBois honored the importance of the town when he selected it as the site of the first meeting of the Niagara Movement in the United States (Nunn 1986:33) [see Figure 56]. Founded in 1905, this black-

led civil rights organization intended to gather all black activities organizations to work toward a collective, national goal of eradicating barriers to full participation in society: "disenfranchisement, curtailment of civil rights, limited job opportunities, inadequate and unequal educational opportunities and the squalid conditions under which black children were being reared in the cities" (ibid.).



**Figure 56. Niagara Movement leaders (clockwise from left) J. R. Clifford, L. M. Hershaw, F. H. M. Murray, and W. E. B. DuBois at Harpers Ferry on August 17, 1906. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-1230).**



**Figure 57. Pilgrimage of the 23rd Annual Conference of the N.A.A.C.P. to Harpers Ferry, May 22, 1932. Photo by Addison Scurlock. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

DuBois returned to Harpers Ferry the next year to lead the Niagara Movement members on a pilgrimage to John Brown's fort to commemorate Brown's martyrdom. Nearly one hundred visitors participated in the event, during which they walked from Storer College to the fort on the Murphy Farm, shedding their shoes and socks and walking barefoot as they approached the fort (Moyer and Shackel 2008:20). An unnamed white source wrote to Reverend Nathan Brackett and his wife Louise to describe what he had observed at the 1906 meeting of the Niagara Movement at Storer College; he was not impressed, finding the men involved to be unfriendly, competitive, and contemptuous of each other. Perhaps threatened by the vision of black men advocating for themselves rather than showing deference, he went on to say: For 5 days I have moved among the 'Four Hundred' of the colored race of the world. Fine looking, fine appearing, gifted, prosperous, they have everything but the one thing they would barter their souls to obtain,

social equality, though with their present attitude toward the white race I don't see what happiness that would bring them. Sane on every other subject, they have neither sense nor reason on this. Superior to the common herd they are conceited to the last degree. So proud are they, that they dare not be affable to a white person especially in the presence of each other for fear of being servile. I miss the courtly deference of the old days.

In spite of hostility on the part of some white residents, the fort remained a sacred site to African Americans in the post-war period and the turn of the century, and served as a pilgrimage site for other organizations such as the John Brown Memorial Association, which formed in Philadelphia in 1914 and sponsored pilgrimages to Harpers Ferry. Every August the park hosts a commemoration of the Niagara Movement's visit in the early hours of the morning, the same time as John Brown's capture. A park employee reported that the John Brown Memorial Association of Chicago also made pilgrimages to the site during the twentieth century. Formed in 1922, the largely black organization had chapters in several cities, and organized pilgrimages to both Harpers Ferry and John Brown's homestead in North Elba, New York. According to another park employee, the John Brown Heritage Association visits somewhat regularly though they have an aging membership. Based in Meadville, Pennsylvania where John Brown owned a house and tannery, the organization is over fifty years old and is primarily composed of amateur John Brown scholars.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has a strong relationship with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, particularly the Jefferson County branch. In August 1990, the West Virginia branch of the NAACP held a state convention at Curtis Freewill Baptist Church. Members also met at the church for an annual conference in which they attend workshops on labor, industry, family, and housing issues. The NAACP has also conducted a memorial walk to John Brown's Fort (similar to the walk performed by the Niagara Movement participants) in which members placed 44 carnations inside the fort to represent the 44 Niagara Movement participants [see Figure 57].

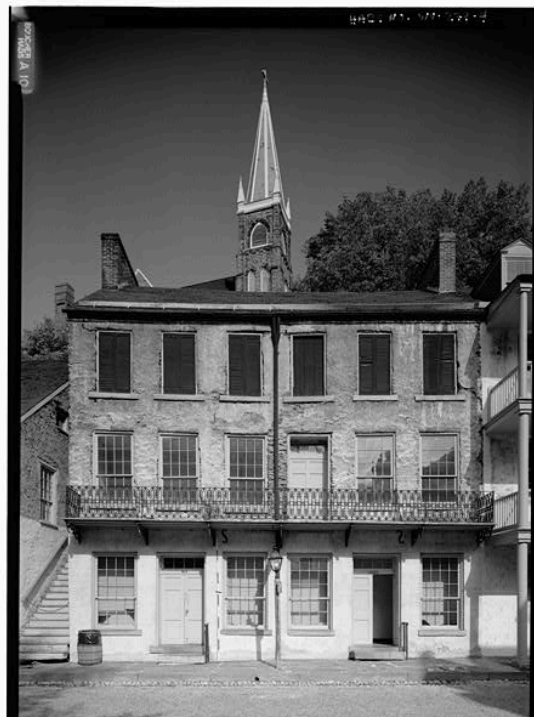
In more recent years, the park has hosted the Washington, D.C. chapter of the International Committee Against Racism until it was disbanded in 1996. Members gathered for an annual commemoration of John Brown at Arsenal Square behind the fort. Usually occurring in October, the event tends to draw forty to fifty people and includes a picket line and demonstration to protest social and political injustices such as attacks on affirmative action, cutbacks in healthcare and education, and the racist treatment of Haitians.

## **Freemasons**

Freemasonry is one of the oldest fraternal organizations in the world, dating back to sixteenth-century Britain and brought to North American colonies in the early eighteenth century (National Park Service 1994). Freemasonry "drew on imagined traditions and values of craft labor and its attendant institution of the guild to create a social and convivial brotherhood. Through the extensive use of ritual and secrecy, the Masons distinguished themselves as an early voluntary organization which would later influence a number of such associations formed during the heyday of American fraternalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (ibid.). The Freemasons have a connection to the park dating back to the nineteenth century. Charity Lodge No. 111 of Harpers Ferry was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Virginia on December 15, 1818. Once the lease was obtained, work began on the local Free Church which was to house the Lodge in its upper story. It was completed in 1827 but burned to the ground in 1845, with a total loss of all

Masonic belongings. It was decided at their next meeting that a member of the Lodge, Philip Coons, would build a third story over his two-story store on Shenandoah Street and give all rights to the third floor to the Masons of Charity Lodge 111 [see Figure 58]. In November of that year, the Masons moved into their new location, where they met until 1860, though they abandoned this meeting place until 1867, presumably due to the Civil War (ibid.).

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, members of Harpers Ferry's most prominent families, such as the Stubblefields, Stephensons, Beckhams, and Wagers, were members of Lodge 111. Stubblefield and Beckham served together on the committee of arrangement for the dedication of the Masonic Hall in the Free Church in 1827. Beckham also helped organize the anniversary celebration for St. John the Baptist three years later. Wager was the Marshall of the dedication procession. Given the highly visible presence of such influential citizens of Harpers Ferry at most of the Mason's public events, Charity Lodge No. 111 "functioned in part as a fraternal forum, cementing an existing social network through which mutually beneficial political, social, and business relationships could be enacted. The frequent public ceremonies staged by the Lodge became in part a means of staging and celebrating this existing social hierarchy and the system of privilege through which it was supported" (National Park Service 1994:11). The Lodge also performed community service and collected membership dues as insurance for when a member died, so that his funeral would be paid for and his survivors would receive financial support (ibid.). The Lodge sometimes sponsored picnics at Byrnes Island for other lodges around the county and in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Island Park was the setting for Masonic Day beginning in the 1880s; these picnics had as many as 7000 attendees in 1879 (National Park Service 1994:14).



**Figure 58. Masonic Hall on Shenandoah Street, some time after 1933. Unknown photographer. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

In 1868 Charity Lodge No. 111 began renting their Lodge Hall to Eureka Lodge No. 25 of Harpers Ferry for \$40 per month. In March of that year, Charity Lodge No. 111 requested a jurisdiction change to the State of West Virginia to reflect the fact that Harpers Ferry was no longer located in Virginia. When the change was granted, Charity Lodge No. 111 merged with the Eureka Lodge and the new organization was known as Logan Lodge No. 25 in honor of Grand Master Thomas H. Logan, the second Grand Master of West Virginia (1871-1874).

Although membership is ostensibly open to any man who is at least 21 years old, of good moral character, and believes in the existence of a Supreme Being, the organization's membership tends to be extremely homogenous. Most Freemasons tend to be white, Protestant, and middle-class, most likely because they had to have their applications for membership endorsed by current members and they were required to undergo a committee inquiry to determine the character of their family life and business reputation (National Park Service 1994:10). In addition, though Freemasons are not supposed to discriminate based on race, religion, nationality, or social standing, people of color were rarely given the same support as their white counterparts. A "colored" Masonic Grand Lodge of West Virginia met in Harpers Ferry in 1893, but the national governing body of Freemasons refused to formally recognize and incorporate African American lodges throughout the nineteenth century (National Park Service 1994:15).

Logan Lodge No. 25 continued to meet in the Coons building until 1952, when the organization sold the building to the State of West Virginia for \$500 and relocated to West Camp Hill, located on the north side of Washington Street in Harpers Ferry, which they had purchased in 1951 (Joe Kemer, personal communication). Their activity was largely uninterrupted from 1867 to 1951, which is remarkable given that Harpers Ferry experienced several floods and economic hardship during that time. Lodge No. 25 is still active today.

## **Recreation Professionals**

Residents of Harpers Ferry have access to more park land per capita and natural recreational facilities than those of most other towns (Addy et al. 2007:18). These amenities include the trails, overlooks, rivers, and woods within the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park; the C&O Canal National Historical Park, with a path popular for cycling and walking; and the Appalachian Trail linking Georgia and Maine. In addition, the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers provide rafting, kayaking, fishing, and other water-related activities.

Even before the establishment of the park, the natural wonders of the area drew hikers and others seeking recreational activities. For example, in 1927 six individuals formed the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club to build the Mid-Atlantic section of the Appalachian Trail; 42 miles of trail were cleared from Harpers Ferry to Linden, Virginia in 1928 and hikers have made use of the trail ever since (Pickett et al. 2009:1) [see Figure 59].





**Figure 59. Appalachian Trail crossing, 2015. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

Given the natural resources available in the Harpers Ferry area, it is not surprising that businesses were created to capitalize on them. Just outside of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park are recreation businesses like River & Trail Outfitters, Historical River Tours, and River Riders Inc., all of which cater to those who wish to have an adventurous experience in Harpers Ferry [see Figure 60]. Some of these businesses have existed in Harpers Ferry for decades. River and Trail Outfitters began in 1972 as a weekend business for commuters from Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, but became a full-time operation in 1976. It has expanded over the years to offer an ever-increasing amount of services, including whitewater rafting in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, tubing around Millville and in the Potomac, bike rentals along the C&O Canal, interpretive hikes, corporate and non-profit retreat activities, and rock climbing. Similarly, River Riders (formerly Shenandoah River Rafters) was established in the early 1970s, and now offers rafting, tubing, and ziplining.

Several park employees told us that decades ago, history was the biggest draw for tourists, but they have noticed an increased number of people coming to the park and to Harpers Ferry for recreation and fitness. The owner of a recreation business noted that he has seen a strong and steady growth in recreation activities in the area since 2000, especially after *Outside* magazine consistently rated Harpers Ferry as one of the best places in the country for hiking and whitewater rafting. Now there are three companies in town that attract people for recreational activities such as rafting and tubing in the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers and ziplining, hiking, biking, and camping in and around the Shenandoah Mountains. The business owner also observed certain demographic changes; that when he started his business in the 1970s, hardly any people of color participated in recreational activities, but in the last seven years there has been a huge increase in African American participants and now he sees an increase in Latino visitors too. These activities tend to be less popular among local residents, who are more knowledgeable and wary of the potential dangers, as the



Sheltons discussed during our interview:

Mrs. Shelton: We have our grandchildren come up and they see kayakers and tubers tubing in the river and they always wanna do that but I've lived here long enough, people die doing that. And you hear the helicopters, the medic helicopters coming in and trying to find them. And it's dangerous, it's very, very dangerous to do that. And it's a popular thing here, people spend lots of money and it brings in lots of tourists. But from living here and knowing how many tourists die doing that every summer, I don't want my grandkids doing that.

Tom Shelton: Well, see, what it is, and I don't think the Park -- the Park doesn't own the river, it belongs to the state, but it's connected to the Park. They don't really tell you that there are sinkholes in that river. If you go down and look at the river and you go, "Oh man, that river, you could just walk right on across," but you better not try it. Because once you go down one of those holes, it's got you.



**Figure 60. Rafting with River and Trail Outfitters, 2013. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

Mrs. Shelton: Yeah, and the rocks keep you from, you know, getting out.

TS: And the, people that, you know, not only the ones that wade across and go fishing step in these holes, it's the people that raft and whatever. They fall out and even with the life preservers on, if you get in one of those deep holes and they pull you under, you there. And, you know, they may not find you for a couple of days, til you come out, it lets you back out. Cause I lost a lot of friends down there, you know. "Come on Tom, let's go swimming!" "Nah. my feet don't leave the bank, I'll tell y'all that right now. Y'all can go out there if you want. If I can't catch a fish from here, then guess what -- I'll go to the store." I said, when I was small, I didn't, you know, somebody else caught the fish, cause I wasn't about to wade out into the water. I said, nah, I said, a bath's good enough for me. Not doing no fishing.

With the rivers' history of floods, drownings, and other disasters, residents' wariness is understandable. However, visitors looking for experiences and adventure are less hesitant, and recreation businesses have sprung up to meet that demand. Though it is difficult to start this type of business, with the challenges of acquiring property and getting access to the rivers, the proximity to Washington, D.C. is a significant advantage for recreation professionals. Their relationship to the park has also been a challenge sometimes, because the two institutions share the natural resources of Harpers Ferry but the park often has managing power. Over time there has been an increasingly formalized relationship between the companies and the park. This is especially true when it comes to river access, which is a primary necessity for recreation companies. In 1983, the park tried to protect historic resources on Virginius Island by implementing area closures to minimize adverse effects of increased river recreational use. The park closed certain portions of the shoreline to watercraft, but this was difficult to enforce due to the sheer number of recreational users, and growing public perception of Harpers Ferry as a prime site for river recreation. The park also developed designated river access area on the Shenandoah River beneath the Route 340 bridge with frequent patrols to

prevent that spot from developing into a “party site,” according to one park staff member. Later, when several companies were trying to use the Potoma Wayside as a take-out point following river tours, the space became increasingly congested and the park moved to regulate the area and protect the resource by requiring the companies to obtain an Incidental Business Permit, which costs fifty dollars per year at present (Dale Nisbet, personal communication). One owner of a recreation company noted that he now has regular but minimal contact with the National Park Service; he attends occasional meetings with the superintendent and applies for permits each year that outline what is allowed, especially with regard to river access points. Another recreation business owner says that before the permits were issued, the rivers were a “free-for-all.” He suggested that the permits were implemented because there was increased activity around the access points, which are small and can only handle a limited amount of use. He observed that people who were familiar with the rivers knew how to make the most of the access points and treat them well, but new people were parking around the access points which led to their deterioration, so the National Park Service implemented greater regulation of the area. Recreation businesses continue to maintain a professional, formal relationship with the park as both parties try to manage and capitalize on the natural resources in Harpers Ferry.

## **Members of the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans**

Following the end of the Civil War, the former Confederate states accepted that they could no longer rely on the institution of slavery or hope for secession, but they were committed to celebrating their Southern history and tradition and countering Northern narratives of the Civil War. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) are two Southern heritage groups that arose out of that period. They have been active since 1894 and 1896, respectively, and worked to preserve Confederate heritage and tradition. Most of their efforts went toward war memorials and monuments to fallen confederates.

The organizations’ most notable connection to the park is the controversial memorial event that the UDC organized in 1931 to honor Heyward Shepherd, a black man and the first person fatally injured during John Brown's raid [see Figure 61]. Shepherd was shot and killed in the course of performing his duty as watchman, patrolling the property of the B&O Railroad. The planning for a commemorative project began in 1920, when author and historian Matthew Page Andrews campaigned in favor of honoring the “faithful slave” who perished in the John Brown raid. Andrews had grown up a few miles from Harpers Ferry and had a deep connection to the town’s history. He also wished to establish the “true” narrative about John Brown, to ensure that he would not be painted as a hero or martyr (Johnson 1997). When the UDC held its annual convention that year, President-General May McKinney championed the project. The UDC and SCV pledged to each put \$500 toward this monument. Walter E. Dittmeyer, owner of the property upon which the first house was built in Harpers Ferry, had donated land for the erection of the memorial a few feet away from where Heyward Shepherd fell. The Mayor and City Council endorsed the plan and a dedication ceremony was arranged for October 10, 1931. Participants in the program included Mary Calvert Stribling, honorary and retiring President of the West Virginia Division, UDC; Rev. George F. Brag, the black rector of St. James Protestant

Episcopal Church of Baltimore; Dr. Henry T. McDonald, President of Storer College; and Col. Braxton D. Gibson, Commander third West Virginia Division, SCV.

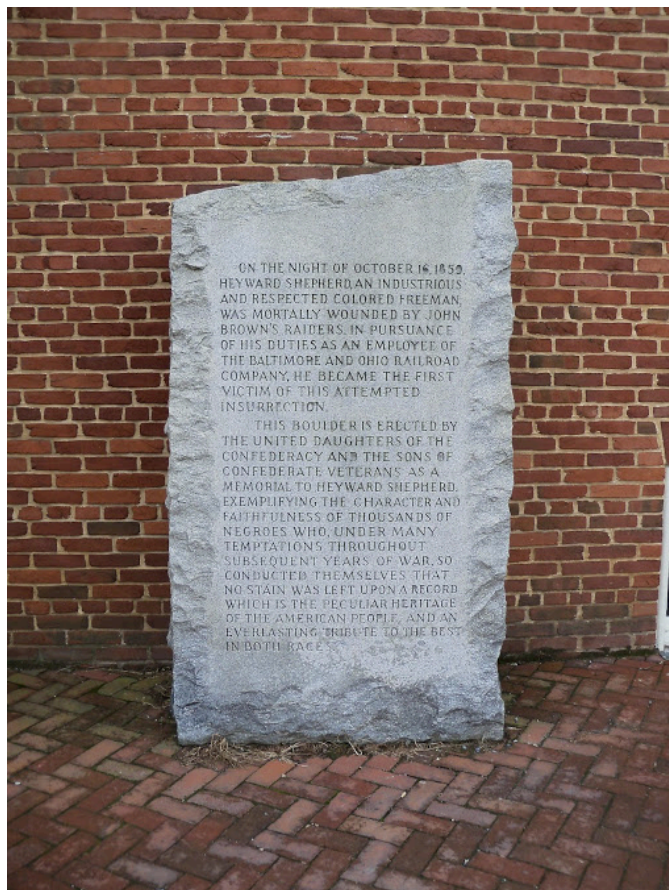
Though the dedication ceremony was ostensibly meant to honor Shepherd, it was largely a celebration of Southern heritage. Part of the monument's inscription reads, "Heyward Shepherd exemplified the character of a transplanted people who so conducted themselves through four years of war that no stain was left upon a record which is the peculiar heritage of the American people." UDC members made speeches denouncing John Brown and celebrating those slaves who had remained loyal to their masters, such as "the black mammy who was so devoted to her charges"; they also praised slavemasters for taking care of their enslaved workers and ensuring that they were content. They also spoke of the necessity of slavery: "For logical reasons the people of the South inherited slavery, but with all the responsibilities that... a Christian conscience could impose" (ibid.). The UDC's words went unchallenged until Pearl Tatter, who was directing the Storer College Choir at the event, arose and, according to Max Barber's account in the *Pittsburgh Courier*: turned, not to the choir, but to that bunch of rebels, and with a voice vibrating with emotion, said: "I am the daughter of a Connecticut volunteer, who wore the blue, who fought for the freedom of my people, for which John Brown struck the first blow. Today we are looking forward to the future, forgetting those things of the past. We are pushing forward to a larger freedom, not in the spirit of the black mammy but in the spirit of new freedom and rising youth." This was a courageous thing to do and it startled the "daughters" almost as much as John Brown's raid startled the old slaveholders. Hats off to Miss Tatter! Now, if someone will place a stick of dynamite under the little monument.



**Figure 61. Dedication ceremony of the Heyward Shepherd Memorial on October 10, 1931. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-1233).**



Local residents and Storer College students as well as some newspapers would later criticize the event and the comments made by UDC members, while Tattam's act of defiance was criticized by white individuals for its impropriety.



**Figure 62. Heyward Shepherd Memorial, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

The monument [see Figure 62] remained in place until 1976, when the park removed it because work was being done nearby. When the work was completed in 1979, the SCV campaigned to have the monument returned, but the NAACP argued that it was offensive and should not be displayed (Shackel 2003:106). The park eventually put the memorial back in 1981 but covered it in plywood (*ibid.*). The UDC and SCV led a letter-writing campaign to pressure the park into removing the wood, which the park did quietly in 1995 with no announcement or fanfare. The park also included an interpretive display about the history of the monument, including the controversy (Shackel 2003:108). Members of the SCV and UDC protested the park's interpretation, believing it to be a biased misrepresentation of the situation, while the park held that the information contained in the placard was necessary background context (Shackel 2003a:145). The NAACP again advocated for removing the

memorial altogether, but the park left both the monument and the interpretive display in place.

The UDC and SCV also have a contentious history in relation to the park's founding. The groups protested against the proposed national monument at Harpers Ferry because they took issue with the focus on John Brown, arguing that his actions should not be celebrated, as he should be regarded as a traitor, not a hero. A park employee recalled that some members of the SCV have complained to him about the way that the Civil War is interpreted at Harpers Ferry.

Today, a few chapters of these Southern heritage organizations still exist in Jefferson County and are active in projects such as Civil War reenactments, recognition ceremonies for fallen soldiers, and Confederate grave markings. A vestige of the Sons of Confederate Veterans exists in Jefferson County; they have separated from the national organization and are now known as the Sons of the Confederacy. The local branch, or camp as it is known, is located in Shepherdstown. The United Daughters of the Confederacy also have an active chapter in Shepherdstown. The groups participate in projects such as recognition ceremonies for veterans, grave markings, and sponsorship of school field trips. The Sons of the Confederacy and the United Daughters of the Confederacy also organize an annual Confederate Memorial Day celebration in Shepherdstown on the last Saturday in May or the first Saturday in June.

## Residents of Virginius Island

Most of Harpers Ferry was government-owned due to the presence of the Federal Armory, but Virginius Island, located just down the Shenandoah River from the Rifle Works, developed as a privately-owned town and became a center for craft, service, and industry facilities (Shackel and Palus 2006:54). Initially these enterprises served to support the armory by supplying processed raw materials and finished products, but over time it expanded to include other industries to serve a wider variety of markets. The island developed during the first two decades of the nineteenth century and initially the main industry was grinding grain for local farmers (*ibid.*). Following a subdivision in the 1820s, the island's next owners operated craft-based enterprises and small-scale industries using waterpower harnessed from the Shenandoah River. Virginius Island always remained separate from mainland Harpers Ferry; it was never connected to public services such as sewers, electric power, and telephones (Shackel and Palus 2006a:837). Furthermore, the island's residents did not fully participate in the market economy, supplying their own provisions by fishing and keeping gardens (838). The island never modernized with the rest of Harpers Ferry, and the community suffered from neglect, eventually being pushed out in the twentieth century due to flooding.

Virginius Island was not suitable for inhabitation until the early 1800s, when the Patowmack Company constructed locks and skirting canals, including a large canal just above the island, in order to improve the Shenandoah River (Johnson 1995). By 1824, the New Shenandoah Company had built a rubble dam across the river to improve the navigation of the river and the flow of water through the canal, and another dam and canal were constructed immediately above the island; both improvements made Virginius Island a more appropriate port and point of departure, and served to channel the water needed for local industries (*ibid.*). John Peacher, a boatman who transported flour on the Potomac River, purchased the island in 1817. Peacher established his boating operation on the island and later added a small mill that ground grain for local farmers. In 1823, James Stubblefield, the superintendent of the armory, purchased the island from Peacher and made a few improvements, namely the addition of a dam just above Virginius Island and a canal through the island, before selling it in four parcels in 1824 to Townsend and Fontaine Beckham, Edward Wager, and Lewis Wernwag (Johnson and Barker 1992:4). The island saw rapid industrial development and by 1826 the island had a sawmill, merchant (flour) mill, oil mill, tannery, and 12 dwelling houses (5). That same year, the island's owners petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for the establishment of the town of Virginius on their island; the town was incorporated the next year (Johnson 1994). By 1830 the island's population had grown to 89 people, including seventy white residents, one free black resident, and eighteen slaves. Thanks to several bridges spanning the Shenandoah Canal, residents and factory owners had easy access to mainland Harpers Ferry. Transportation improvements in the 1830s further facilitated the expansion and development of the island's industries. The Winchester & Potomac (W&P) Railroad Company built a depot on Virginius Island, which facilitated the transportation of goods and people. The development of the Frederick and Harpers Ferry Turnpike, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad meant that agricultural and industrial products could be shipped between Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., and more goods could be bought and sold as regional and national markets became

accessible (Johnson and Barker 1992:8, Shackel and Palus 2006:54). The island's population grew from 89 to 113 between 1830 and 1840, with at least half of the heads-of-household working in island industries (Johnson 1995). Nearly a quarter of the island's residents were immigrants, primarily from England but also a few from Germany, Ireland, and Scotland (*ibid.*). The population was composed of mixed social classes, with residents falling into the category of laborers, skilled workers, or semi-skilled workers. Some residents were more prominent due to their family connections, leadership positions, or personal wealth (Johnson and Barker 1992:21). The Wernwag family was particularly important to the development of Virginus Island; the main (and only) street was named Wernwag Street. Lewis Wernwag had a close relationship with Armory Superintendent Stubblefield, and had a virtual monopoly on woodturning contracts to the U.S. Armory (Johnson and Barker 1992:100). Wernwag also patented, constructed, and sold "Self Regulating" railroad cars, was involved in the construction of a bridge over the Monocacy River for the B&O Railroad, constructed a lock for the C&O Canal, built dams on the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers for the U.S. Armory, and built structures for the gun factory (Johnson and Barker 1992:100). In addition, he used his house as a boardinghouse and tavern where he hosted guests for up to two weeks at a time (*ibid.*).

Although the island saw increased development in the 1830s and 1840s, it remained tied to Harpers Ferry and relied on the town for most of its goods and services, and in fact the island was absorbed into Harpers Ferry in 1851 (Johnson and Barker 1992:30). In the late 1840s, two cotton mills, the Harpers Ferry Shenandoah Manufacturing Company and Valley Mills, began operating on the island. The mills employed both men and women and contributed to a sixty percent increase in population between 1840 and 1850 (Johnson 1995). Unfortunately, these industries were not sustainable as there were more cotton mills in the United States than raw cotton or demand for cotton products, and both mills eventually went into debt (*ibid.*). The remaining owners sold their property and Virginus Island and its industries were consolidated under one owner, Abraham Herr, by 1859 (Sarles 1969:7). At this time, the Island contained 37 buildings, including a cotton factory, a flourmill, a machine shop, a sawmill, an iron foundry, a blacksmith shop, a chopping mill, and 25 dwellings (*ibid.*). Herr developed the island as an industrial complex with associated worker housing. Under his leadership, employees became unskilled factory workers and no longer learned crafts (Shackel and Palus 2006:55).

Herr's improvements were significant, but ultimately could not counteract the failure of the cotton mills. Between 1850 and 1860, 85 percent of island residents had died or left the island for Bolivar or mainland Harpers Ferry (Johnson and Barker 1992:57). Although Herr had more plans for industrial development, he was not able to implement them due to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 and the arrival of Confederate and Union troops. Confederate soldiers burned his flourmill that year, and Union forces occupied the island between 1862 and 1866 and used it "as barracks and stables, workshops, corrals; for hospital, storage, and other purposes" (45). Most, if not all, of the island's residents left during the war, and the island was not repopulated until close to 1870, when it had regained 66 percent of its pre-war population (59). Herr sold the island to two industrialists, Jonathan Child and John McCreight, who operated a flourmill, while a cooperage, sawmill, and machine shop resumed operations [see Figure 63]. However, Virginus Island never reached the prosperity of the pre-war era, due to a lack of interest and capital for investing in new industries, and also the closing of the Federal Armory had a detrimental effect on the businesses it had supported (Johnson 1995). In

addition, a massive flood occurred in 1870, killing 42 of the island's residents and destroying twelve buildings including the foundry, sawmill, carriage shop, and machine shop (Sarles 1969:10). Many houses were damaged, and residents moved their furniture and household items upstairs and left their homes. The flourmill was undamaged, but eventually closed in 1889 because it couldn't compete with mills that had transitioned from waterpower to steam (Sarles 1969:33).



**Figure 63. The Child and McCreight Mill on Virginius Island served as a cotton factory (1848-1852), a Union hospital (1863-1865), and a flour mill (1867-1889), Photo ca. 1890-1913, courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0897).**

In 1893 the Shenandoah Pulp Company purchased the island and used many of the buildings primarily for worker housing for its mill employees. By this point, the island was mostly composed of working-class residents who rented their homes and worked for an absentee landlord and business owner (Shackel and Palus 2006:63).

In the early twentieth century, only a few households remained, and island residents continued to move to Harpers Ferry and Bolivar due to the decay of their houses resulting from flooding and neglect (55). The old flourmill had crumbled and the bricks were removed and reused by local residents (Poss and Moss 2010:125). As the island became less of an industrial environment and more park-like, it became a favored spot for fishing, camping, and swimming, as well as a popular destination for auto tourists (*ibid.*). The town of Harpers Ferry also leased the island for Sunday schools and Christmas services in the 1920s. The island became exclusively residential, and those who remained formed a tight-knit community. Edna Brashear Farmer, who lived on Virginius Island from 1914 until 1924, described it in an interview as such:

Well it was, it was a beautiful place there. We kept the property all clean and nice, painted up and everything, walkways in front of the houses were all brick, the walls were up as high as the railroad track and they had the houses all cleaned up and in good shape and the parkway, the little parkway from the island up to the paper mill, we had it all cleaned off, tables and all in there to enjoy yourself. People would come there and eat

dinners and one thing or another.

Farmer attended the Shipley School “up the hill” on the mainland, and while her friends sometimes came to visit her on Virginus Island, she usually played with her friends on Shenandoah Street in Harpers Ferry. Most of the men worked for the pulp mill or the railroads, while the women often worked in Harpers Ferry, for example, doing housework and domestic chores for those who lived on Camp Hill. People did their shopping in Harpers Ferry but many had gardens and chickens to supplement. Farmer didn’t view Virginus Island as a separate community from Harpers Ferry, although she did notice class differences: kids “up the hill” had more toys and the women had more leisure time and didn’t have to work as hard. Though residents of Virginus Island regularly went to Harpers Ferry for work, socializing, and errands, Harpers Ferry residents and visitors from Washington, D.C. and Baltimore would frequently come to the picnic grounds on the island.

The pulp mill closed in 1935 and a devastating flood occurred in 1936, destroying many of the extant structures and washing away the bridges that crossed the rivers and connected Virginus Island to Harpers Ferry (Sarles 1969:12) [see Figure 64]. The last inhabitants were forced to evacuate the island, which remained abandoned for several decades, until it came into the custodianship of the National Park Service.



**Figure 64. The former Armory Paymaster's House consumed by floodwaters, 1936. Photo courtesy of Harpers Ferry NHP Historic Photo Collection (HF-0053).**

## Subsistence Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering

The park has abundant natural resources spread over a landscape that includes agricultural lands, grasslands, major rivers, forested mountains, riparian habitats, and old fields. The land is host to plants, berries, nuts, and game, all of which are potential food sources. Our research showed that while no particular group from the recent past or present has a history of depending on these resources for subsistence, local residents do have a custom of collecting these items recreationally or to supplement their existing food sources.

Hunting is technically illegal in the park, but there are many reports of local residents having participated in these activities in or around park property. One park employee noted that he used to see deer



stands on the park boundary line facing toward the park. He has also found salt licks, which he interpreted as a sign that people are baiting deer. Nowadays, deer stands are portable so he doesn't know where they're being set up and they're harder to distinguish, but he knows that hunting is still taking place. In our interview with Mike Jenkins, he observed that people on Loudoun Heights are longtime hunters who chafed against the park's rules when the mountain came under federal control:

Megan Bailey: Yeah, and you had mentioned poaching earlier. Is that something you had heard or know of happening?

Mike Jenkins: It happens. The park has a very vast amount of wooded land and again this is something that the locals have done all their life. The land behind me isn't necessarily the most recent that's come into the park, but it was 340 acres that got donated to the park in 1995. The mountain pretty much considered it their land and there were some initial problems kind of just getting it under control but after the park sent a couple rangers over there they probably did a couple arrests, the message got out that it was just not the place to be. When I'm monitoring the Appalachian Trail up there, yes I've encountered a bow hunter, probably the only expression is that he knew I was not a threat. They can identify readily who's a threat, who's not a threat but he didn't see me as a threat. We did talk. Again, my fear is that these people know me more than I know them but I do have enough connection with the law enforcement and, if they'll again respond and come over and check it out then they can do whatever else it is they do. It's the bottom line is if they just catch one or two the word gets out. As I tell them, they sometimes don't even have to get out of the car. They just drive the road, everyone will know when they come up the road. I mean, it's almost like a party line to say 'OK, the park is here.' If the park doesn't ever come up, then it becomes a free-for-all. Now, is it a lot? No. There are probably some local families that are known that have traditionally hunted and probably regardless of the consequences they'll continue to do it, so--but I'll say, from what I know I don't think it's any large degree, it's just a very select stubborn group of mountain people and again they know--how they perceive the situation I don't know--they are aware that it's park land. I mean, they're not ignorant to that fact at all and they are gonna be very cautious of what they're doing, when, for the most respect but again, I would probably tell you it's mostly deer which the park is engaged in a study right now and--probably if they let the locals take care of it, they wouldn't have a problem [laughs]. But yeah, so like I say, it would be probably greater numbers but a lot of people at this point, they know not to mess with it. They don't want to take the consequences so they, at this point have found other places that they're hunting larger tracts that are further out like Kearneysville or Middleway. I mean, I know that people are again hunting places like that and rather there than hunt in the mountain.

Tom Shelton noted in our interview that the park boundaries limited the scope of hunting grounds, saying, "you gotta watch where you hunt at now.... before, you could hunt anywhere."

Given the presence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers, fishing has occurred since the early occupation of the region. The rivers are known for their smallmouth bass and channel catfish, as well as other species of game fish such as striped bass, largemouth bass, walleye, several varieties of sunfish, and tiger muskellunge. Farm families and residents of Millville fished throughout the twentieth century to supplement the food they grew or purchased. Today, fishing is allowed from park shorelines in accordance with the laws and regulations of the state in which one is located, unless the state law conflicts with Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which manages and protects the property and resources of national parks. One park staff member observed that people rarely fish from the shoreline within the National Historical Park, perhaps because those areas have few and small fish, and also perhaps because there is poison ivy along the shoreline, which may deter some visitors; however, he had observed people fishing at Dam 3 in the Potomac River north of Harpers Ferry, and fly fishing from rocks in the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers.

Harpers Ferry's many acres contain a wide variety of plants, many of which are edible. Some native plants in the area include sassafras, wild garlic, wild sarsaparilla, wild ginger, chestnut tree, hazelnut, wild yam,

wild licorice, Virginia strawberry, Jerusalem artichoke, wild mint, blackberry, raspberry, blueberry. All are likely to have occurred within the National Historical Park boundaries prior to European settlement and still occur naturally there (Rouse 1997). Some park employees had heard of local residents collecting berries and mushrooms, and several interviewees recalled having personally collected wild plants, mushrooms, berries and nuts growing in and around the park. One local resident recalled collecting walnuts on Bolivar Heights, which his mother used in baking. Another admitted that she regularly collected herbs from around the park but was careful to leave plenty behind. Morel mushrooms are common around the park and when they are in season, people are allowed to collect up to a gallon a day. Mushroom hunting has a long history in the park, as Mike Jenkins told us in an interview:

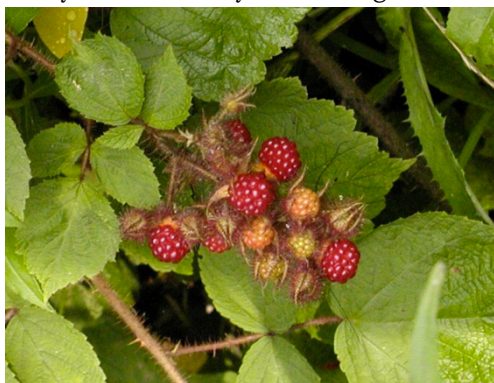
Mike Jenkins: Yeah, so a lot of the places in the park I know prior to being the park, kinda my affiliation with--if I'll call it the mountain--being Loudoun Heights. I'm a fourth, fifth generation mushroom-hunter.

Megan Bailey: OK.

MJ: So, every spring we would hunt morels and traipsed a lot of the mountain to find very few generally but yeah so I just learned a lot of the area mushroom hunting in the spring.

Jenkins also collected berries with his family and still does so today, as he told us in an interview:

Pretty much the only other thing we did is what we call wineberries, and wineberries are, I'll call 'em a relative to a raspberry, generally are out 4th of July and there are places where you can get very massive quantities, let's say [see Figure 65]. I probably stopped doing a lot of that 10 years ago because--I mean, we used to pick up the railroad a lot, we used to pick by the power lines a lot, we used to pick besides the road a lot--and they just got really concerned, more of emissions, fumes, what pesticides would be used. I still do enjoy them but in more--places that are more out of the ordinary, that are not so close to roads, for instance, or, let's say, railroad tracks. But, I mean, yeah there were years when we would get massive amounts. I mean, we'd pick wineberries a lot. I mean, my mother had a--I'll call it a ten-gallon igloo cooler, so she'd juice before--like I say, it was still a weekend place--so we picked them, she juiced them, we put them in the car to take them home, and by time with the heat and the agitation and we got them home they had about four inches of foam on top of it, it made some good jelly though so like I say,



**Figure 65. Wineberries in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, 2013. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

we've--we and some other people, I tell ya, still pick wineberries. Other than that, I don't know of anybody--I mean, the Appalachian Trail community, we talk about ginseng a lot. I don't know of anybody locally that's doing ginseng. Nobody's out there collecting nuts like, again they used to. Historically if you went back a hundred years, people would've been living off the land, collecting nuts but again I don't know anybody that's doing that at all and yeah so probably wineberries and mushrooms are like the only things that I know of going on in my area of the park.

Gathering plants is a local custom that relies on education passed down through generations to identify which items are edible and which are poisonous. Newcomers and young people are less likely to participate in this gathering activity due to unfamiliarity with the landscape and the natural resources in it.

Tom Shelton illustrated this point with an anecdote during our interview:

I said, field greens, you know, other stuff I was telling you about, it's still out there, you know, but you just gotta know what you're looking for. And you don't wanna eat the wrong thing. Cause there's berries I've seen little kids eating. We'd be walking the trail and they're walking along, "Can we eat that," "No, don't eat that." Cause there's some poison stuff that's out there, it grows just like everything else, and just like one year there's

the stuff called gypsy moss, I think. It comes in like a pod. It still grows around here. I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole, of course I wouldn't have ever dreamed of what these kids did, they read it in a book. It comes up in like a pod and has little stickers on it. You mostly see it in a cow field. And it pops open and it's got these white little things that come out and we used to go over and blow them and watch them pick up, and that's what I thought was the only thing you did with them. Well, these kids read somewhere in a book that you could smoke the seeds inside. Well, when they did that, they almost killed all, I think there were five or six of them, and I knew, well, I think they all survived, but some of them were a little messed up in the head. One guy is a grown man now, and I asked him several years after that, I said, What made you think about-- "Well, we read it in a book." I said, that's all, ok, I said, I'm glad I didn't pick up that book. And a doctor who was at WVU [West Virginia University] saw the symptoms in a cow or something and he knew was the symptom was looking like and he sent from WVU the remedy. That's the only thing that saved him, it made him hallucinate so bad, you know. My neighbor, his son was one of them, he died -- he didn't die from that, but he should've! But he started beating up the walls in the house and whatever, and they had to put him in a straitjacket. But that's just to let you know that there are plants out there that can hurt you and kill you just as well as there are good plants out there. And the Park Service, I think they have a program now to show different plants that you can know what to eat and what not to eat, and some of them are flowers and whatever. So, you know, they are helping the people to educate themselves, but still, you can be out there just like I was when I was a little kid and picked up that toadstool and my dad would knock my head off and tell me it wasn't a mushroom. And I learned quick what a mushroom looked like and what you could eat. Now, I never, there's other mushrooms out there that you can't eat, but I'm not too sure about them. They said that the ones that grow off a tree-- my dad didn't show me that one, and I wasn't about to touch one. I think about that big hand of his hitting me across the head and I said, nah, I'm not touching that. There's no way on God's green earth I'm touching that.

According to Shelton, resources are available to people, but few know how to identify them. Consequently, fewer people hunt, fish, or collect plants today compared to when he was growing up. He further explained this gap in knowledge: "You could always find something to eat. Just go outside and walk around the woods. I could probably go outside or down to the woods right now and find something to eat, enough to, to be all right. But a lot of people can't do that anymore."



## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION



**Figure 66. View of Harpers Ferry from Maryland Heights, 2013. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.**

It is difficult to adequately describe a place whose history stretches back 10,000 years and whose land covers a wide area and many different terrains. Any attempt to do so will surely leave some areas unaddressed or under-addressed. However, if we may be so bold as to attempt to succinctly characterize the town of Harpers Ferry, its history, and its people, the word that seems most fitting is “palimpsest.” In its original usage, the word referred to a manuscript made of parchment or papyrus on which the text has been incompletely erased or scraped off and new text had been written over it. More broadly, a palimpsest refers to “something reused or altered but still bearing traces of its earlier form” (Oxford English Dictionary). Metaphorically speaking, Harpers Ferry is that manuscript upon which text—in the form of people, communities, structures, etc.—has been inscribed, and then wiped out by natural disasters, war, and changing technologies and industries, only to start over and rebuild atop of the rubble of the former town. Historical flood data show that Harpers Ferry experienced 42 floods between 1748 and 1896 (Fuertsch 1992), with the more catastrophic ones damaging or destroying property and temporarily or permanently forcing people out of their homes and businesses. During the Civil War, the activities of Union and Confederate troops decimated the town yet again and turned it into a “no-man’s land,” according to town resident Joseph Barry (1903). The hardships of war

likely drove people away and the instability and uncertainty of a war-torn town undoubtedly kept many from returning (Shackel 1993:3.2). As Moyer and Shackel put it, “Deserted and partially ruined, Civil War troops effectively left the town in a dilapidated state—physically, emotionally, and economically” (Moyer and Shackel 2008:9). In the twentieth century, the frequent occurrence of catastrophic floods and the rise of the automobile physically and economically wiped out homes, businesses, and industries that kept Harpers Ferry afloat, serving a serious blow to the town and its people, and permanently damaging and/or closing some industries and businesses. Jacqueline Porter argues that Harpers Ferry was ill equipped to deal with natural disasters and changing technologies, and the town’s decline in the first half of the twentieth century was due to a lack of time, resources, initiative, and investment for recovery (2011:153). Consequently, “businesses and industries went under or abandoned the area” (ibid.). Harpers Ferry experienced several destructive events that rendered it a ghost town at many points in its history, yet it never remained that way permanently. While many residents left for greater stability or prosperity, some eventually returned, or the town’s resources, industries, or natural beauty attracted newcomers. Residents built or rebuilt their homes and businesses over the wreckage of the last catastrophe, and continued to go on. The traces of Harpers Ferry’s past events remain on the manuscript, so to speak – today, visitors can see the ruins of the abandoned St. John’s Episcopal Church and the foundation outline of the arsenal buildings destroyed in the Civil War [see Figure 67]. Harpers Ferry’s history is a succession of declines or disasters and periods of recovery and reconstruction, a continual writing over of the landscape.



**Figure 67. Ruins of St. John’s Episcopal Church, located on Church and Cliff Streets, 2014. Photo by Erve Chambers.**

The fact that Harpers Ferry was never totally abandoned following any of its major floods, the Civil War, or other natural or human created disasters it faced, is evidence of another characteristic of the Harpers Ferry community: resilience. In spite of these many catastrophes, the town’s residents persevered. This was thanks in part to Harpers Ferry’s proximity to major transportation routes, which helped it recover from disasters fairly quickly, bringing in supplies and people via rail, highway, canal, and river (Porter 2011:153). In addition, it seems that residents had a hardiness and determination that saw them through difficult times. In our interview with lifelong resident Jay Mauzy, he said of the frequent flooding: “The river would get high,



sometimes it would get up in the Lower Town a little ways, people just put up with it. . . . You move upstairs and have to clean it up when it's all over. That's all." Residents of Harpers Ferry learned how to deal with the circumstances imposed upon them and continue on. It is a testament to the townspeople's resilience that the town is still populated following the Civil War, the flood of 1936, and the dissolution of their industrial base. Even the twenty-first century has not been disaster-free; in July 2015 a fire ripped through four historic buildings in Lower Town, destroying eight businesses and several apartments. A boarded-up storefront was seen with a sign that read, "We are strong! We are positive! We will survive!" (Schackner 2015). Newspaper reports show that the local residents have rallied around the owners of lost businesses to support them through their recovery and reconstruction after the fire; the strength of the community gives people something to rely on in times of distress. In addition, residents displayed a self-sufficiency that made them better equipped to handle difficult times. For example, many older residents we interviewed recalled that most families cultivated gardens and sometimes livestock, regardless of whether they lived on a farm or in Harpers Ferry proper. The ability to produce one's own food, or make one's own clothes, toys, and other goods, made residents less vulnerable in times when those items could not be procured so easily.

In spite of the challenges, the local residents we spoke to tend to remember the past fondly. Though life could be difficult or uncomfortable, and few people ever achieved wealth or prosperity, residents have positive memories about the years they spent in Harpers Ferry. The most common sentiment shared by residents is that life was full of hardship in the past, but it was also better, safer, friendlier back then, that everyone was poor but even so they were living in the "good old days." Perhaps the passage of time has done the work that Margaret Atwood (1998:20) describes: "But who can remember pain, once it's over? All that remains of it is a shadow. . . . Out of sight, out of mind."

## **Summary of Traditional Activities and Associations**

The purpose of this study was to provide an overview of the town's history as well as an identification of important associations or relationships that connect the town's current residents to the park and its natural and cultural resources. While we were able to identify several ties between residents and the landscape, overall these associations are not particularly numerous or robust. We suggest that people may not have formed strong, cohesive communities or associations due to the particular conditions under which Harpers Ferry developed. It seems that residents of Harpers Ferry have always had limited access to or power over local resources, as a small elite group, or outside institution often had the most control. For example, the Wager family's monopoly on private land prevented armory workers and other townspeople from owning property in Harpers Ferry; the armory consumed a large amount of land, river access, and other resources; Union and Confederate forces controlled the town throughout much of the Civil War; and the federal government has exerted control of the area through the presence of the National Historical Park. Limited access to the sites, structures, and resources in the Harpers Ferry area could have prevented residents from forming strong associations and organizing traditional activities around these features.



Additionally, Harpers Ferry's history is characterized by a series of disruptive forces – natural disasters, war, economic depression – that drove residents to leave Harpers Ferry in search of greater stability and economic security. While the town was never fully abandoned, its population has been depleted several times over the past two centuries. It is possible that the repeated occurrence of disruption and depopulation negatively affected residents' ability to establish strong and lasting ties to the landscape.

Still, it is clear from our research that much of Harpers Ferry's population does have some kind of connection to the park, some closer than others. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find a resident of the town who isn't touched by the park in some way. For some, the park has always been there; they grew up with it and don't know of a different landscape. Older generations who saw the park's establishment seem to fall into one of two camps, either seeing it as a boon to the town as it brought in revenue and the National Park Service did valuable work to preserve and clean up Harpers Ferry, or as a nuisance that inhibits free movement and activity. Some resent the idea of anyone, especially a federal agency, dictating what they can do and where they can go. One local resident complained that the park surrounded the town and restricted its growth. Others see it as a benign force, perhaps inconvenient at times, but ultimately nonthreatening.

Some of the negative opinions people had about the park were related to the fact that residents resented the newly restricted access to the federal areas:

Residents were perhaps unprepared for the loss of authority over and access to areas that had functioned as public space. Parking, street use and right-of-way ownership became an ongoing source of dispute and negotiation. Restricted access to the Shenandoah shoreline - a long-time site for fishing, swimming, picnicking, and camping--displeased both townspeople and visitors, and was one of the first federal actions to elicit protest (Moyer et al. 2004:117).

We spoke to a park employee who agreed that people in the community view him and his colleagues as an arm of the federal government that does not respect or care about the private citizen. He noted that there was tremendous animosity toward the park and many people "hate [their] guts," but he hadn't seen it expressed in harmful ways (e.g. vandalism of the park). The employee expressed a belief that increased communication with the local community and government would lead to more support for park initiatives.

Though residents of Harpers Ferry may have complicated feelings about the park as an institution, they still identify certain landscapes, buildings, and landmarks as places of significance. These include the townscapes of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, cemeteries, schools, churches, historical structures, and neighborhoods. A variety were identified in the course of this study; there are a few that were more commonly mentioned.

Storer College has particular resonance for alumni of the school as well as local residents who grew up around it. For alumni, Storer College provided a warm, welcoming environment where they received a solid education and made friendships that would carry them through the ensuing years. It is where they spent the first years of early adulthood and had a taste of independence. For local residents, Storer College was an institution that formed the backdrop of their daily life. As children, it was their backyard and "playground," and for all ages it was a provider of public services in the form of educational and social activities. In addition, it held significance as a safer space for African Americans in a racist, antagonistic environment. Many Storer alumni could not recall any activism around civil rights on campus or even a personal awareness of it, which could be due to the fact that the college provided a protective bubble that blocked out the more aggressive

and harmful racist discrimination and prejudice that students might have otherwise experienced. The significance of having this kind of escape cannot be overstated.

The area identified as Schoolhouse Ridge and Allstadt Farm by the National Park Service holds a great deal of significance for those who grew up in Millville, the Standard Lime and Stone company town. Though most of the houses and plant works are now gone, former residents have strong attachments to the landscape where they spent their childhood and young adulthood. But this significance is not only confined to the former residents of Millville; their descendants also feel a connection to a place they never lived in but grew up hearing about. The sons of Dixie Wiltshire and Guy Chicchirichi were present during our interviews, and casual conversations with them revealed that they knew almost as much as their fathers did about their family history and connection to the quarry, and in some cases filled in the gaps of their fathers' knowledge when memory failed them. These stories and oral histories have been passed down through families, as has the value and significance of this place. For this reason, the park should consult with the quarry workers and their descendants when initiating large scale projects involving changes to the cultural landscape.

Farmland and farming hold a lot of importance to those who are still engaged in agricultural activity or were until recently. Those currently farming certainly feel a historical connection to the land, which was often in their family for decades or even centuries. The fact that they can draw a line from their ancestors to their immediate family and that they are tied together by a shared vocation and land ownership is a point of pride for the farmers we spoke to. Farm families also have ties to the park and areas such as the Murphy Farm and the Allstadt Farm, particularly when they have a business relationship that connects them to the park legally and professionally.

Natural resources found in the park and the surrounding area are also important to local residents. People reported hunting and fishing and collecting mushrooms, nuts, berries, and other plant items in the three hills of Harpers Ferry— Bolivar Heights, Maryland Heights, and Loudoun Heights. It appears that people are not dependent on the collection of these natural resources for subsistence; rather, it is recreational or supplementary to their other methods of obtaining food. Aside from when Native Americans occupied the land, there is little to no evidence in the historical record that collection of natural items was a subsistence practice at any point in Harpers Ferry's history, though a lack of evidence does not mean that the practice did not occur. In any case, it seems that plant collection in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has occurred but neither the amount of people doing it or the amount of food collected has been significantly large enough for the park to notice it. It also appears that the hunting and gathering of food is largely the domain of older residents— aged fifty and up—who remember participating in this activity or still engage in it. This suggests that it is primarily people who grew up in the area and know where to find the natural resources they are seeking who engage in hunting and gathering because they have been in the area all their lives or have been shown where to look for plants and animals by parents or other family members.

The Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers were also an important resource for people, particularly those who lived in rural areas or Millville – areas where families were more isolated and possibly had to find additional means of supplementing their food source. In addition, it appears that reliance on the rivers was more pronounced in poorer families or in difficult times such as the Great Depression. The rivers were of

value to even those who did not take advantage of them for fishing, swimming, or other purposes. Though the rivers were known to be a dangerous entity due to the possibility of drowning, they were also a source of sustenance and part of the backdrop of their lives, something that people had grown used to having and valued as part of their landscape.

It is clear from this study that even when local residents do not make use of a particular resource on a daily, monthly, or even annual basis, they still value the presence of the resource. Regardless of whether they visit John Brown's Fort or collect mushrooms, for example, local residents are still aware that these resources exist and imbue them with memories and attachments. In the case of older residents, it may not be feasible for them to participate in the same activities that they once did, but they are attached to these places and lament the fact that a favorite place is being renovated, developed, or demolished. Still, they accept that this is the way of the world and is inevitable or necessary. As Storer College alumni Dewitt Jacobs observed, "So life changes and we change and we going to change" (Eff 2013).

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Continue the study of the African American presence in Harpers Ferry to better capture and understand the diversity of groups and experiences contained within this community.**

It became clear in the course of the study that the African American community comprises groups and individuals who have some shared history and experiences but are also unique in many ways. Our interviewees alluded to some of these differences; for example, one resident noted that African Americans lived in neighborhoods segregated by class status. We recommend investigating this line of detail further to identify distinct communities (neighborhoods) and their histories, and to determine how these varied groups may have been associated with the landscape, its structures, and its resources in different ways. There are several research questions that we believe would be worth pursuing: Where did these different groups originate? How did the different neighborhoods form? How did middle or upper-class black residents achieve their wealth? Answering these questions will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the African American experience in Harpers Ferry and the ways in which members of this community are associated with the sites, structures, and landscape in and around the park.

- 2. Conduct more research on the history of contraband camps and attempt to make links between those living in the camps in the 1860s and their descendants in the present day.**

Harpers Ferry attracted and housed a large number of runaway slaves, or contrabands, during the Civil War. However, our knowledge of these individuals, their origins, and their experiences in the contraband camps is relatively sketchy. It seems likely that at least some of the contrabands would have remained in Harpers Ferry following the Civil War, and their descendants may still live there today. The park has a valuable resource that could help trace that particular connection: the Quartermaster's Ledger for the U.S. Armory, which lists the names of contrabands who came into Harpers Ferry between 1862 and 1866. We did not have the ability to research these names or attempt to find descendants, but we recommend pursuing this

line of inquiry in order to enhance the park's knowledge of the diversity of the African American community and its origins.

**3. Revisit the history of Italian American quarry workers and conduct further research on their ties to landscapes and structures still in the park.**

The Italian American quarry workers and descendants we spoke to have clear associations with the local landscape, particularly the town of Millville. Due to their strong ties to landmarks such as the former quarry complex and the Shenandoah River, this group is particularly promising in regard to further inquiry. Though we were able to identify some of their traditional associations and activities, we believe it would be worthwhile to conduct additional research to determine how Italian American quarry workers' histories are tied to other landscapes and structures in the possession of the park.

**4. Further explore the history and present-day reality of Loudoun Heights neighborhoods and their associations with park-acquired property across the river.**

While we do have some information about the history of Loudoun Heights and the role it played in the development of the U.S. Armory, we know less about the current inhabitants of Loudoun Heights and their personal associations with the armory and sites, structures, and landscapes around the park. Several local residents speculated that descendants of armory workers live on "the mountain" and maintain an insular community that rarely interacts with the park. We were not able to conduct the research necessary to verify these statements, so we recommend additional investigations to gain a better understanding of the trajectory of Loudoun Heights' history and the extent to which residents maintain a connection to the landscape's past.

**5. Continue to explore possible connections between the local environment and Native Americans.**

Currently there is very limited park recognition of a Native American presence in Harpers Ferry. This is due to the fact that Native American groups were forced to leave this region long before the establishment of the park, and though some Native Americans returned in the 20th century, they did not do so in substantial numbers, nor did they return to the exact location of their ancestors. Today, there are no federally recognized tribes in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, nor are there ethnographic resources, traditional cultural properties, or Indian trust resources in the park that are linked to contemporary Native American groups. Therefore, it is unsurprising that we were unable to make contact with those of Native descent. However, according to the U.S. Census, there are those who identify as American Indians living in Jefferson County. Furthermore, while West Virginia does not have any federally- or state-recognized tribes, Native Americans living in the state took it upon themselves to organize the Appalachian American Indians of West Virginia and the West Virginia Native American Coalition. In addition, Maryland has two state-recognized tribes and Virginia has one federally-recognized tribe and eleven state-recognized tribes. It is possible that these groups might have valuable information about the history of Native Americans in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry, and it would be worth contacting them in consultation with the National Capital

Region Ethnographer.

**6. Continue efforts to reach out to and involve those who live in and around Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in the park's activities.**

A sentiment expressed by several residents we spoke to is the need for better communication with the park. Interviewees sometime lacked adequate information about park policies, leading to confusion or misunderstandings about management decisions and a sense of disconnect from the park. In a conversation with us, a park employee observed that the National Park Service could improve its local public relations by having more respect for park neighbors and leading more public education initiatives around park resources. He added that the park needs to make local residents feel like “we’re all in this together” with shared goals of maintaining the landscape, scenery, and quality of life. While the park has made significant outreach to those living in the vicinity of the park, we suggest further involvement with local residents and particularly with those who feel especially disconnected from the park’s activities, such as residents of Loudoun Heights.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PARK RESOURCES IDENTIFIED BY LOCAL INDIVIDUALS AS HAVING IMPORTANCE**

The primary source for identifying the following resources has been the interviews we conducted and oral history interviews we collected during the course of our research.

#### **Natural Resources**

Harpers Ferry's abundant natural resources – including plants, nuts, berries, large and small game, and fish—have long been used by local communities. There is a tradition of residents collecting these items in and around Harpers Ferry to supplement their diet, a practice that continues to this day. Some residents have expressed dissatisfaction with restrictions on these activities since the establishment of the National Historical Park, but hunting, fishing, and plant collecting are still practiced by those who are familiar with the park's landscape and its resources. According to our interviewees, these activities tend to take place on Bolivar Heights, Loudoun Heights, and the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers.

#### **Grand View School**

The National Historical Park's ranger station is the former Grand View School, which was a four-room school built on Putnam Street in 1929 to serve black children in the area. Previously, these students had been relegated to ad hoc schools in churches or small one-room schoolhouses that the student body soon outgrew. Grand View provided an elementary education to black students until Harpers Ferry's schools were integrated in 1965. Though the Park Service now owns the building and has repurposed it for a new use, black residents who attended the school still have ties to the building, not only because it is where they learned and played as children, but also because it is located in a historically black neighborhood where a community formed around the school and the nearby church, First Zion Baptist.

#### **Jefferson Rock**

At least since Thomas Jefferson stood upon it in 1783, Jefferson Rock has long attracted visitors for the spectacular view it offers of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and for the intriguing way in which the rocks are precariously arranged. It is a popular site for hikers, tourists, and residents alike. Storer students spent their free time at Jefferson Rock during the

early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while local residents have brought family and visitors there. The site is an important part of the landscape for those who live(d) in and around Harpers Ferry.

### **Loudoun Heights**

Loudoun Heights refers to both a mountain—the second highest overlooking Harpers Ferry—and the unincorporated village located on the mountain. It is significant in many respects, having been the site of activities supporting the U.S. Armory, the location of one of the most damaging attacks on Union forces by Confederate troops during the Civil War, and is a popular place to hunt and collect morel mushrooms. Many of the mountain's residents and their families have lived there for decades, establishing strong ties to the land. It is possible that some of these individuals are descendants of armory workers, some of whom lived and worked on Loudoun Heights before the Civil War erupted. Our interviewees describe the Loudoun Heights community as a small, relatively isolated enclave that is tied to the mountain through family history.

### **Lower Town**

This is the area bounded by Potomac Street, Public Way, and Shenandoah Street. Once a commercial center in Harpers Ferry, with grocery stores, hotels, and restaurants, it now serves as the historical center of the park. The area is somewhat residential as well, as some locals live on these streets. Since the park may literally serve as their backyards and/or front yards, local residents are significantly affected by changes that occur in Lower Town. The protest over the removal of parking in Lower Town indicates that residents had a particular way of interacting with or using this space and are troubled by changes that disturb these habits. At the same time, some residents are dependent on the presence of the National Historical Park as they run the gift shops and inns north of Lower Town on High Street that are supported by the visitors who are drawn to the park.

### **Murphy Farm**

Murphy Farm has been in agricultural use since Edmund H. Chambers purchased the property in 1848. For a time, it was also a pilgrimage site for members of the Niagara Movement and other visitors when John Brown's Fort was located on the farm. Before it came into park ownership, the farm served as a location for local recreation, as the fields and woods were popular places for children to play. Local residents also collected plants from this property. The Murphy farm was threatened by development in the early 2000s but the park's acquisition of the property helped preserve and maintain the agricultural tradition in Harpers Ferry. Today, the land is still cultivated by local farmers.

### **Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers**

The presence of the rivers significantly shaped Harpers Ferry's past and continue to do so in the present. They attracted Native Americans thousands of years ago, followed by European settlers in



the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. George Washington had the U.S. Armory constructed in Harpers Ferry in large part due to its strategic location near the two rivers. The presence of the rivers accelerated the transportation of goods and people when road travel was unreliable and the railroad had not yet been constructed; in the 1830s they allowed for the expansion of the canal system to provide more options for travel. The rivers facilitated the growth of agriculture in the region by providing fertile floodplains. Local residents have long made use of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers for recreation; today, rafting and kayaking are popular activities. Finally, residents of Harpers Ferry and the surrounding villages of Bolivar, Millville, and Halltown relied on the rivers for fish, which they collected as a recreational activity or to supplement their diet. The rivers' frequent floods have damaged or destroyed Harpers Ferry's built environment innumerable times and been a disruptive force in the lives of residents. However, historically many of the activities that local residents have engaged in revolved around and depended on the presence of the rivers, making them an indispensable part of life for some residents.

### **School House Ridge**

This was the site of a Civil War battle, but the stronger associations local residents have with this location are due to its proximity to the village of Millville and the previous site of the Standard Lime and Stone Company quarry, which employed a significant number of local residents between the 1900s and the 1970s. Quarry workers and their families remain tied to the landscape of their childhood and adulthood, particularly those who were born and grew up in worker's housing in Millville and/or worked in the quarry during the twentieth century. Residents of Millville formed a tightly-knit community with its own institutions, including grocery stores, churches, and a school. A large concentration of Italian immigrants and their families lived in this area, and remain nearby in Harpers Ferry, Bolivar, and Charles Town today. At present, most of the workers' houses have been removed and Millville is depopulated, but former quarry workers and their descendants maintain ties to this landscape.

### **Storer College**

Storer College has been part of Harpers Ferry's landscape in some fashion since 1866. It was the first institution of higher learning open to African Americans in West Virginia, and attracted black students from surrounding states. The community of teachers, staff, and students was close-knit and supportive, according to alumni reports. The presence of the college also benefitted local residents, as it provided jobs, educational activities, and social events to townspeople and their families. Storer College also has ties to Harpers Ferry's tourism industry, as Camp Hill, on which Storer was established, became a popular locale for tourists (particularly wealthy ones) to spend the summer. The campus also served as a meeting place for black advocacy organizations from near and far. Today, Storer alumni and their families return to the campus for an annual reunion to renew their ties to the college and preserve an important tradition.



## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED AND RESOURCE PEOPLE

\*indicates an interview is on record and transcribed

Name	Location	Affiliation
Baihly, Lee	Knoxville, MD	River and Trail Outfitters
Biggs, Kim	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Bolton, Todd	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Bopp, Larry	Baltimore, MD	
*Chicchirichi, Gary “Guy”	Charles Town, WV	
Custalow-McGowan, Shirley “Little Dove”	West Point, VA	Mattaponi Tribe
Frye, Dennis	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Gavin, Annette	Harpers Ferry, WV	Jefferson County Convention and Visitor's Bureau
Hammer, Michelle	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Hassler, Darlene	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Howe, Elizabeth	Hagerstown, MD	Washington County Free Library
*Jenkins, Michael	Harpers Ferry, WV	
Kimmel, Ross	Arnold, MD	
King, John	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Knott, Matthew	Harpers Ferry, WV	River Riders
Lamarre, Lora	Charleston, WV	West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
Landsman, Cathy	Hagerstown, MD	Washington County Historical Society
Lee, Andrew	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
*Mauzy, Joseph “Jay”	Harpers Ferry, WV	
Nisbet, Dale	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Name	Location	Affiliation
Parsons, Mia	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Perks, Doug	Charles Town, WV	Jefferson County Museum
Piscitelli, Debbie	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry Historical Association
Rago, Linda	Harpers Ferry, WV	
Rissler, Jane	Charles Town, WV	Jefferson County Museum
Rudy, John	Harpers Ferry, WV	Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
*Shelton, Tom	Harpers Ferry, WV	
*Smith, Rhonda	Harpers Ferry, WV	
*Spriggs, Sharon	Harpers Ferry, WV	
*Tabb, Jane	Ranson, WV	Lyle C. Tabb & Sons, Inc./Jefferson County Commissioner
Tom, Christy	Shepherdstown, WV	Shepherdstown University Library
*Wiltshire, James "Dixie"	Harpers Ferry, WV	
*Wysong, Locke	Ranson, WV	Wysong Farm
Zimmerman, John	Harpers Ferry, WV	

## APPENDIX C WORK PLAN

### ETHNOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT FOR HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Prepared by Erve Chambers, Paul Shackel, and Megan Bailey  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Original Plan: November 20, 2014  
Revised Plan: March 5, 2016

## REVISED WORK PLAN

### ETHNOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT FOR HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

Original Plan: November 20, 2014

Revised Plan: March 5, 2016

#### Project Overview

The context for this study is fully described in the statement of work that is attached to the task agreement entered into by the National Park Service and the University of Maryland, College Park. The objective of the project is to conduct an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment related to traditional and contemporary ecological, cultural and historic associations with the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The study will include those people and communities who have had and may continue to have traditional use associations with the park and its resources, although the major focus of the study will be to identify and describe contemporary associations of ethnographic groups to the park. The research will include consultation with persons with relevant knowledge of the area, ethnographic observation and interviewing, a search of published histories and ethnographic material pertaining to the area in which the park is located, archival research in search of relevant archeological and historical records and documents, and the collection of a minimum of eight focused and semi-structured interviews or oral histories.

Major objectives of the research include:

To describe the broad history of community formation, growth, and change in the region from the first European settlement to the present time, and specifically those communities lying within or adjacent to Harpers Ferry.

To research potential Native American associations to resources now managed by the park, or document the lack of contemporary associations by state or federally recognized tribes.

To compile ethnographic information about historical and contemporary peoples in the study area, document traditional associations between these people and the park, and provide direction for future ethnographic research. It is anticipated that the study will identify culturally specific uses of park resources and culturally or historically significant sites, places or objects within the park. It will provide information about the extent to which natural and cultural resources are considered to be heritage resources in the context of the history and cultural traditions and practices of contemporary communities or groups.

To identify those instances in which documentation or research is lacking in respect to particular associations or communities or groups.

To conduct the research in such a way as to encourage active involvement between park officials and staff and the communities with which the study is concerned.

This work plan describes activities that have been conducted in preparation for our research and provides a proposed plan and timeline for the research. On the basis of our preparation, we suggest here that the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park be developed in such a way as to identify all relevant human associations with the park and its resources but to focus the greater part of our attention on four or five communities or groups that seem particularly promising in respect to their relevance and their relationship to the park. These communities or groups are:

1. Long term residents of African American descent. While associations through Storer College appear to be well documented, we suggest that there is value in exploring less well researched associations related to nearby African American communities. These might include, for example, employment, enslavement, the use of natural resources, associations with the Harpers Ferry contraband camps (or

“settlement”, camp evidence is scant, many were in houses), and experiences of racism and/or discrimination.

2. Italian quarry workers. These associations speak to the exploitation of natural resources in the region. We understand that there is a descendent community and there are material remains of the workers’ housing and the quarries.
3. Representatives of the tourism industry. Tourism is clearly one of the longest enduring industries of the region, linking the town’s past to its present in several respects. This group is among those most directly affected by the park and its management.
4. Armory workers. The United States Armory played an important role in the political and economic development of Harpers Ferry. We have the names of several residents who have associations with the Armory.

We propose that the focused interviews and oral histories required for this research be directed to these groups. We see greater value in having the opportunity to direct two or three interviews to a particular associated community or group than in spreading them out in an attempt to cover eight or more different groups.

### Progress to Date

Preparation for this ethnographic overview and assessment began in September 2014 with the formation of a research team composed of Dr. Erve Chambers, Dr. Paul Shackel, and Ms. Megan Bailey, all of the University of Maryland, College Park. Officials and staff at the National Park Service’s National Capital Region and at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park have been very helpful in providing their insights and guidance. Ms. Joanna Fisher, an intern with the National Capital Region will also assist in the research. Initial activities have included:

Conducting two site visits to the area, described below;

Beginning a working bibliography of available scholarship, documents and additional secondary source material;

Identifying local residents and other individuals who might serve as sources for additional information related to the project and as potential subjects for focused interviews and oral histories;

Compiling a list of potential archival and other library and museum resources relevant to the study area, some of which have now been visited either in person or online;

**Site Visit October 13-15 2014:** On October 13 Erve Chambers toured downtown Harpers Ferry and visited the Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public in search of relevant documents. He drove to Shepherdstown where he had an appointment with Christy Tom, the Special Collections Librarian for Shepherd University’s library. He spent much of the afternoon reviewing documents and resources provided by Ms. Tom. He also visited the Shepherdstown public library. Megan Bailey joined Erve on October 14 and they drove to Charles Town, where they visited the Perry Room at the Charles Town library and The Jefferson County Museum. They toured downtown Harpers Ferry in the afternoon and Erve took photographs. Erve visited the Murphy Farm area. Paul Shackel met Erve for breakfast and they visited the now vacated Hilltop House. They were then joined by Megan for the kick off meeting with several National Park Service officials and staff. After the meeting they visited the NPS archives and were provided a driving tour along School House Ridge South and North.

**Site Visit November 5-7 2014:** Megan Bailey arrived in Harpers Ferry on November 15 and was joined by Joanna Fisher the next day. Michelle Hammer, Museum Specialist, provided her with an orientation to the park’s archival materials. Megan met with Michelle, Mia Parsons (Chief of Resources Management), Andrew Lee (Land Management Specialist), and Darlene Hassler (Park Archeologist) to discuss the project and solicit suggestions for resources and potential interviewees. She later met with former NPS employee Tom Shelton

to obtain more recommendations for local informants. On November 6 Megan and Joanna familiarized themselves with the resources housed in the park archives, then had an appointment with Chief Historian Dennis Frye to discuss resources and potential interviewees. On November 7 Megan and Joanna spent some time in the park archives before visiting the Charles Town library and the Jefferson County Museum. They met with the museum curator, Jane Rissler, to learn more about the museum's archival collections.

**Site Visits and Archival Research November 2014-February 2016:** Additional research activities and site visits are detailed in the additional periodic reports submitted to Jennifer Talken-Spaulding (May 31 2015 and October 20 2015) and to Eola Dance (March 3 2016). The required outline for our final report was submitted on November 3 2015 and discussed on November 4 2015 with Jennifer Talkin-Spaulding and Mia Parsons. A written response to our outline was received March 4 2016

## Research Methods

The research team will use both archival and library resources and fieldwork methodology for the research. Archival and fieldwork research are integrated throughout the research process. For example, preliminary archival visits have already served to suggest particular lines of inquiry for future interviews. In turn, in depth interviews are likely to point to additional archival and published sources. The final report will incorporate both archival and fieldwork (interview) data.

## Archival Research

Historical information related to Harpers Ferry and the surrounding region exists in local, state, national, family and other archival and library collections. We will make use of specific and appropriate information from these sources, including scholarly publications, research reports, diaries and family records, letters, newspapers, census data, genealogies, and oral histories, rounding out the ethnohistorical portrait developed through interviews and additional fieldwork. Archival and library resources currently identified include:

The Maryland Historical Trust\*

West Virginia Division of Culture and History (Incl. WV Archives)\*

WV GeoExplorer\*

The Jefferson County Historical Landmarks Commission\*

Maryland State Archives\*

Boonsboro Free Library (MD)

Washington County Free Library (Western Maryland Room)\*

Washington County Historical Society\*

Western Maryland's Historical Library\*

Historic Shepherdstown Museum

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (archives and library)\*\*

Jefferson County Museum (and JC Historical Society)\*\*

West Virginia State Museum

Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society



WV State Museum Exhibits Online\*

Bolivar/Harpers Ferry Library\*\*

The Maryland Room of the University of Maryland Hornbake Library

The Maryland Historical Society

Library of Virginia

Virginia State Archives

Loudoun County Public Library

Loudoun Museum

Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum

Shepherd University Scarborough Library\*\*

Shepherdstown Public Library\*\*

Charles Town Library\*\*

Virginia Historical Society\*

Lovettsville Historical Society (and museum)\*

\*indicates that these places have been visited at least once online

\*\*indicates that these places have been visited at least once in person

### **Interview and Fieldwork Methodology**

Ethnographic fieldwork generally involves observation and a variety of inquiry and interview approaches that are meant to further our knowledge of the ways in which local knowledge both reflects and informs a research problem. For the purposes of this study, “local knowledge” might be understood as those perspectives on historical and traditional associations that are held by persons who reside at or near Harpers Ferry. Ethnographic methods to be employed in this study include:

Recorded observations taken at community events and festivals, especially those that focus on particular aspects of local or regional heritage;

Informal discussions and meetings with local residents and other knowledgeable persons in order to identify additional records and information as well as potential interview subjects;

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with local residents and others who have ties to Harpers Ferry and its environs.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a limited number of topics that are determined in advance by the interviewer but that remain informal and open ended in that both the interviewer and the interviewee are free to elaborate and explore new themes or topics as a result of what the interviewee says. All the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study will be based on a flexible protocol prepared in advance for each interviewee and based on the special knowledge or experience of that interviewee. While some topics will be similar across interviews, the ways in which they are expressed will vary from one interview to the next depending on the understood expertise of the interviewee and their relationship to the park and its resources. All semi-structured interviews will be taped and subsequently transcribed.

The following sample protocol indicates some general topics that are likely to be addressed in many of the interviews:

Can you tell me something about your connections to this area? How long have you been here, if your family has been here awhile, things like that? [probe: occupations of self and family members]

What about the national historical park? Are there ways you feel connected to the place, or ways you or your family have used the resources of the park in the past, even before there was a national park there?

Can you tell me something about what it was like to grow up around here? What kind of things did you and your friends or families do here? [probe: relate question directly to the areas of the park]

Can you think about how other members of your community might have been connected to or used some of the resources within the park or nearby it, people other than your family?

What about now? What parts of the park do you or other family members make use of now?

What are some of the biggest changes you have noticed since growing up around here? [probe: relate question directly to the areas of the park]

Is there anything else you can think of that might help us understand all of this better?  
Are there other people who know some of these things that we should be talking with?

We recognize that the park is most interested in those groups that had historical and may have ongoing traditional uses related to the parks and its resources, in descriptions of the uses and where they took or take place, and an “emic” or locally produced sense of the heritage of these groups which connect them with the park and its environs. As we suggested above, we feel it is better to concentrate the semi-structured interviews on a few closely related groups who have clear associations with the park.

## **Report Outline**

This section of the work plan provides an outline for our research report along with greater detail concerning the research focus we noted earlier.

### **Forward**

A brief discussion of the study and how it was accomplished.

### **Part One: A Place in Time**

This section will describe the broad history of community formation, growth, and change in the region from the first European settlement to the present time, focusing on those communities lying within or adjacent to Harpers Ferry. While the research for this study will focus on contemporary park connections that have continuity with earlier patterns of association, it is necessary to ground such discussions in the context of the historical, social and demographic patterns out of which they emerged. In this overview, transportation and its development will be seen as linking and influencing many of the ways people have made use of the park's places and resources.

This section will also describe the research team's efforts to document contemporary Native American associations related to the park and its resources.

### **Part Two: Some Traditional Associations Linking the Past with Its Present**

This section will describe in detail three or four groups that have clear associations with the park and its resources. At this time we feel the following groups are most promising for this treatment: (1) The African American population of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar; (2) The Italian quarry workers; (3) Representatives of tourism industry; and (4) Armory workers. These descriptions will be supported with our semi-structured

interviews and oral histories, field observations, and documentary and archival evidence uncovered during our research.

### **Part Three: Additional Groups with Park-related Associations**

This section will be devoted to discussing additional ethnographic communities or groups and their traditional associations with the park. In each case the discussions will necessarily be brief, describing the group and its associations (especially those that are ongoing) as uncovered by documentary and archival evidence, field observations, and informal discussions with local residents.

Some of the groups to be considered for this section include: farm families; persons associated with Storer College (not included in Part Two above); reenactors/living history participants; Civil War descendant families; long-term park employees; family associations with cemetery sites in the park; descendants of WPA workers; subsistence fishermen; NAACP members; representatives of the religious community; members of the Odd Fellows fraternal organization; residents connected to the Old Masonic Lodge in the Philip Coons building; guides and recreation professionals; armory workers; Job Corps workers; Grand View School former students; Daughters of the Confederacy and others; transportation workers.

### **Part Four: Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research**

A brief conclusion will be followed with recommendations for future research that might be most profitably pursued with the greatest advantage to the park.

#### **Project Timeline**

Research activities are assigned to six approximate periods of time, determined in part by the task agreement and in part by the researchers' other commitments.

**Period One** (September 2014 to December 2014). This was a period of preparation for our research. We have identified archival resources and made initial contact with National Park Service officials and staff and others regarding previously conducted research and research approaches for the overview and assessment. We have conducted site visits to familiarize ourselves with the area and with research facilities. A kick off meeting with NPS officials and staff was held during this time period.

**Period Two** (December 2014 to April 2015). We will conduct at least three extended site visits to consult with park service personnel, expand the number of local contacts, and collect pertinent material from local archival sources, including nearby repositories in Washington County, Maryland, and Loudoun County, Virginia. We will prepare interview schedules and conduct a minimum of four in depth interviews and/or oral histories. We will meet with community members as feasible and engage in informal discussions regarding the research.

**Period Three** (April 2015 to July 2015). During this time period, we anticipate that most of our work will rely on internet resources and acquiring additional archival data, with one likely site visit. We will create a detailed outline for the final report and a work plan describing our plans for completing the research. This plan will include a description of remaining data requirements and indication of the places/people that might best supply these needs.

**Period Four** (July 2015 to September 2015). We anticipate conducting at least three site visits during this time period. We will conduct a minimum of four in depth interviews and/or oral histories. We will continue to meet with park service personnel and with community members.

**Period Four** (September 2015 to January 2016). During this time period we will continue archival and on site research as needed. If they have not already been transcribed, we will transcribe all the interviews. An outline for the final report will be completed and submitted to the NPS.

**Period Six** (January 2016 to March 2016). Preparations for writing the final report will begin during this time period as we await the results of the park service review of our outline. This will include writing some parts of

the introductory sections of the report and assembling and code our data in such a way as to facilitate writing the report.

**Period Seven** (March 2016 to December 2016). The final report will be drafted during this time and submitted to the NPS by May 30 of this time period. Upon receipt of the park service comments on the draft final report (June 30), we will conduct additional research if needed and revise the report as required. We will submit the final report no later than September 30. We will coordinate with the park service a presentation of our findings by November 30 and complete all additional work on the project by December 20.

**Revised and resubmitted by:**

Erve Chambers, University of Maryland College Park

Paul Shackel, University of Maryland College Park

Megan Bailey, University Maryland College Park

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