

REVEREND NATHAN BRACKETT HOUSE
(Superintendent's Clerk's House)
(Building 57)
Fillmore and Lancaster Streets, Camp Hill
Harper's Ferry National Historical Park
Jefferson County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-283

HABS
WVA
19-HARF,
33-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: Southeast corner of Fillmore and Lancaster streets, Camp Hill, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia.

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: latitude 39° 19' 15", longitude 77° 44' 11"

Present Owner/
Occupant: National Park Service
(Harpers Ferry National Historical Park)

Present Use: Harpers Ferry National Historical Park offices

Significance: Originally constructed in 1857-58 as one of two identical residences for Army officials, the Brackett House was designed by Superintendent Henry W. Clowe for the Superintendent's Clerk. The Brackett House and its pendant, the Morrell House which was built for the Paymaster's Clerk, were part of the Armory's continuing plan to architecturally embody industrial and administrative reforms. While echoing the architectural design of the Superintendent's and Paymaster's Houses, also on Camp Hill, the Brackett and Morrell Houses nonetheless visually communicated their residents' lower rank within the Armory hierarchy. After the Civil War, in 1868, Brackett House and the three former Armory officers' residences on Camp Hill were granted to Storer College, an early African-American college established in Harpers Ferry. For almost a century, the Brackett House was an important Storer College residence. Founders Nathan C. and Louise Brackett lived there for many years, and since that time the building has been known as the Brackett House. Until Storer College closed in 1955, the residence variously housed students, teachers, summer boarders, and even a grocery business. Among the four residences for Armory officials built on Camp Hill, Brackett House has most closely retained its original proportions throughout its history.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1857-58. The lot which later became the site of the Brackett House was included in the large tract of land purchased from John Wager, Sr. by the United States on June 15, 1796 for the erection of a Federal Armory in Harpers Ferry. The lot remained vacant, but was not retained from the sale of government land in 1852. As the Inspection Report of government lots dated July 20, 1852 noted, "The reservations of land between the quarters of the Commanding officer [Superintendent's House] and the Military Storekeeper [Paymaster's House] affords good lots for such quarters as may be necessary at a future time for the officers of the Armory. Which might be erected perhaps from the proceeds of the sales of public lots and houses" (Inspection Report of Harpers Ferry Armory, July 20, 1852,

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to Secretary of War, Conrad, National Archives, Reel 20, vol. 2, p. 123). The Superintendent's Clerk's House, which would later become known as the Brackett House, was one of three armory dwellings authorized by a joint resolution of Congress on April 23, 1856 to be funded by the proceeds from the 1852 sale of government lots. On June 28, \$18,000 was allocated for the erection of houses for the Superintendent's Clerk, the Paymaster's Clerk, and the Master Armorer (Craig to Clowe, June 28, 1856, Reel 19, vol. 9, p. 871).

On September 14, 1856, Colonel Henry K. Craig, the Inspector of the Armories of the Ordnance Department, noted in a letter to Secretary of War Jefferson Davis that "two of the dwelling houses for Clerks that were authorized to be erected and paid for out of the proceeds of sale of Lots, will soon be commenced on the hill near the Armory..." (Craig to Secretary of War Davis, September 14, 1856, Photostats, vol. 3, p. 62). In November 1857, the *Virginia Free Press* remarked that

on Fillmore Street, Camp Hill, a great change has been made, hollows have been filled, hills have been removed and the feet of pedestrians now tread this new made Street. Two splendid mansions are in progress of completion on this street, constructed by the Government at a cost of \$6,000 apiece, as quarters for the clerks employed in the Armory.

By May 1858 the quarters for the Superintendent's Clerk (Brackett House) and the Paymaster's Clerk (Morrell House) were completed and ready for habitation according to letters submitted by Superintendent Clowe to the Ordnance Department (Clowe to Craig, April 3, 1858, Photostatic Collection, vol. 3, p. 83; Craig to Clowe, May 18, 1858, Reel 19, vol. 10, p. 972).

2. Architect: Armory Superintendent Henry W. Clowe drafted a set of plans for the residences of the Superintendent's Clerk, the Paymaster's Clerk, and the Master Armorer in July and August 1856. Clowe had been appointed superintendent in 1854, following the passage of legislation which returned civilian superintendents to the federal armories. Clowe had been employed at the Armory since 1841 and had held the position of master machinist since December 31, 1850. Although Clowe was expected, like all other superintendents at the Armory, to design necessary buildings for the Armory, he may have had less experience in this field than some of his predecessors, most notably John Symington who had been trained as a military engineer. Clowe's designs did, however, largely follow the architectural program Symington had established the previous decade.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: After construction of the residence was completed in 1858, Archihald Kitzmiller, the Superintendent's Clerk, moved into the house. Kitzmiller had been employed as the clerk to the superintendent from at least as early as October 1841. Although by 1844 he and his family had moved into the two-story brick house Captain John H. Hall had built on Camp Hill in 1827, they were forced to relocate to Lower Town after Hall's house was demolished in 1848 to make way for the Paymaster's House. Kitzmiller, his wife Ann Kitzmiller and seven children lived in the Superintendent's Clerk's House (Brackett House) on Camp Hill until April 19, 1861 when Confederate troops seized the Armory.

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According to the "Inspection Inventory of Harpers Ferry Amory" drafted by Brigadier General Edward D. Ramsay on July 27, 1865, the Sanitary Commission had its offices in the former quarters of the Superintendent's Clerk. Although the exact fate of the house during the Civil War is unknown, the inspection inventory described it as being in "bad condition." In a letter to Storer President Henry T. McDonald dated September 6, 1917, Martha W. L. Smith, one of the teachers who was sent to Harpers Ferry by the Freewill Baptist Home Mission Board, "Mrs. Winters, the grandmother of Luke" occupied the Brackett House after the Civil War until October 1868.

At some time in 1868, the stockholders of Storer College submitted a petition to the United States Congress requesting the transfer of two former Armory buildings on Camp Hill, the Brackett House (Superintendent's Clerk's House) and the Paymaster's House to Storer College. On December 15, 1868, this transfer was authorized along with two additional buildings, the former residences of the superintendent (later Anthony Hall) and the paymaster's clerk (Morrell House). All four buildings were officially transferred by a deed from William W. Belknap Secretary of War to the Trustees of Storer College which was dated December 15, 1869 (Jefferson County, WV, Deed Book 4, p. 575).

As Mary Brackett Robinson recounted in her Founder's Day Speech in 1937, "Traditions and Memories," Brackett family legend indicated that the Brackett family may have occupied the structure prior to obtaining legal title. On the other hand, Martha W.L. Smith recalled in her letter of September 6, 1917 to President McDonald that at some point after the opening of the school in the fall of 1867, "we went to Bolivar to live when the farm work began so that Mr. Brackett could have more oversight of it." It is possible that the Bracketts lived at the Smallwood farm during the summer season and then returned to the former Armory officers' residences during the winter months. Although the exact date is not known, at some point – perhaps as early as November 1868 – Nathan C. Brackett and his family moved from their rooms in the Paymaster's House into the former Superintendent's Clerk's House, thereafter known as Brackett House.

In their first years in residence here, the Brackett family was not the sole occupant of the house. According to Mary Brackett Robinson, her family shared the upper floors of their house with several young women students who slept and prepared their meals there until Myrtle Hall (later known as Mosher Hall), the new girls' dormitory, was completed in 1879. In a letter dated March 1878 to Mrs. Mosher, the editor of the Freewill Baptist Sunday School paper *The Myrtle* which sponsored a fund drive for the construction of the girls' dormitory, Nathan C. Brackett noted, "We have not felt that we could get along this way another year, i.e. be so crowded. We have but one sleeping room for our family of six. No room for hired girls..." The following year, Brackett mentioned in another letter to Mrs. Mosher that "We still have five girls in a room, but we won't have when we get another floor of Myrtle Hall." According to the 1880 Census, there were twenty-three people living in the house, including thirteen students.

As historian Mary Johnson has observed, it is unclear if the Brackett family remained in Brackett House throughout their affiliation with Storer College. In the 1900 Census, Nathan C. and Louise W. Brackett are listed as living in a home they owned on South Cliff Street

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(JCC Census, p. 77B). In addition the author of the "Supplemental Notes" to Kate Anthony's history of Storer College which was published in 1891 suggests that quarters for Principal Brackett and his family had been constructed in Anthony Hall.

Brackett House, like many other buildings on the Storer College campus, functioned as a boarding house in the later years of the century (see HABS No. WV-171 for a more detailed account of this era). In July 1887, the *Pioneer Press* noted that the Brackett House, among most other Storer College buildings, was open for summer boarders. According to A. Mercer Daniel's article on the history of his family in Harpers Ferry, for several years Thomas S. Lovett and his wife Lavinia Holloway Lovett opened Brackett House to accommodate the overflow of summer guests at the neighboring Lockwood House (the former Paymaster's House). During this period, the Brackett House may have also been known as the Lockwood Annex as there is a reference to such a structure in the August 16, 1887 edition of the *Spirit of Jefferson*. Storer President Dr. Henry T. McDonald likewise referred to the former function of Brackett House as a "year round boarding house" in a letter to Mr. Hudson dated March 28, 1944. Unlike Morrell and Lockwood houses, Brackett seems only to have functioned as a summer boarding house for a couple of seasons. Although it is unclear when Thomas and Lavinia Lovett stopped hosting summer guests in Brackett House, it was sometime before the summer of 1890. That June, Thomas and Lavinia Lovett opened up the Hilltop House which later became the most fashionable hotel on Camp Hill.

Nathan and Louise Brackett may not have remained in Brackett House while it was used as a summer boarding house. However, interviews with their grandchildren Mary Louise Newcomer Moore and John Newcomer, which were cited by Mary Johnson, suggest that Nathan and Louise Brackett were living in Brackett House in the early years of this century. Mary Moore recalled that she lived in the house after Nathan Brackett died in 1910 around the time that her father, John Newcomer, began working at Storer College. At this time, her grandmother lived in rooms on the second floor. The Newcomers remained in Brackett House until Lura Brackett Lightner died in 1925. However, her mother, Louise Brackett, continued to live in Brackett House until her death in 1936.

In the fall of 1910 the Brackett House may have been opened again as a dormitory for students. According to an article written by the new President Henry T. McDonald in the Freewill Baptist newspaper, the *Morning Star*, "All of our accommodations for girls were taken in the first week. We are now debating the question as to whether to refuse admission to those who are expecting to enter, or to open the Brackett House for girls. The latter course is possible, but the matter of additional expense makes it a matter of careful consideration." It is not clear, however, what the final decision was regarding overcrowded conditions on campus that year.

On September 10, 1927, the *Farmers Advocate* noted that James W. Pierce was moving from the Paymaster's House to Brackett House. An advertisement in the December 7, 1929 edition of the *Farmers Advocate* announced the opening of a business run by J. W. Pierce at Brackett House offering oysters, fish, fresh meats, vegetables, fruits, poultry, and dressed fowls for sale. Although no further reference to this grocery business in Brackett House has been located, James W. Pierce and his wife seem to have remained in this building until at least

1930. In June of that year, the *Farmers Advocate* announced that Griggs Pierce of York, PA was spending the summer with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Pierce on Fillmore Avenue, presumably in Brackett House.

Even while Pierce ran his grocery store there, Brackett House may have continued to function as a teachers' residence. On June 16, 1928, the *Farmers Advocate* reported that "teacher Mr. Harris" had recently moved into the Brackett House. This notice may have referred to John W. Harris who was a teacher at Storer College for several years.

From as early as 1926, the Trustees of Storer College had considered remodeling Morrell, Brackett, and Lockwood houses to provide additional dormitory space for the college. President Henry T. McDonald noted in a letter dated November 26, 1926 to Dr. Anthony that the Trustees had also previously considered selling these three properties. A few months later, the General Board of Education inspected the Storer College campus. According to a letter sent to the Trustees on February 15, 1927, President McDonald was hopeful that the General Board of Education's inspection of the campus might lead to the offer of funds for the renovation of Morrell, Lockwood, and Brackett. However, such an offer was apparently never made. The plan to use Brackett, Lockwood, and Morrell houses for dormitories was revived the following decade, as President McDonald indicated in a letter to Storer Trustee Grant Hudson on June 9, 1938. Although renovation of the Paymaster's House (Lockwood House) for this purpose was undertaken in the 1940s, Brackett House was not included in this project.

In August 1944, McDonald indicated that the house had last been rented for \$25 a month to two families who were victims of a flood, presumably the flood of October 1942. This family appears not to have stayed long because McDonald noted in the same letter that it had been vacant for the past 18 months.

A few months before President McDonald retired from Storer College, he wrote to Grant Hudson, one of the Storer Trustees, on October 21, 1943 asking if the college would consider selling Brackett House to the McDonalds. He mentioned that the building had stood empty for six months and that "the day has passed when we can consider using properties for a theological department." Even in this letter, which appears to have been the first time the possibility of the McDonalds purchasing Brackett House was proposed, President McDonald noted that the building was not in good condition. Although the Henry T. and Elizabeth McDonald eventually did move into the Brackett House, negotiations with the Trustees lasted almost a full year. On March 31, 1944, Grant Hudson wrote to Treasurer George B. Fraser assuring him that he saw no harm in the McDonalds using Brackett House since it was currently vacant. However, the question of how much money the college was willing to invest in much-needed repairs to the building incited extensive negotiations between the two parties. On May 8, 1944, Hudson wrote to fellow Trustee Harry Meyers and stated that he doubted the board would be willing to spend \$1800 on Brackett House. Nonetheless, according to the minutes from their meeting on May 27, the Trustees voted to offer Brackett House rent-free for the rest of their lives to President Harry T. and Elizabeth McDonald. According to the "Storer President's News Letter" of March 20, 1945, the McDonalds were finally moved into Brackett House in October 1944. The amount of funds the Trustees were

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willing to spare for repairs to Brackett House continued to be a topic of debate until Hudson informed McDonald on October 26, 1944 that the Executive Committee must decide on \$5000 for repairs to Brackett House.

After President McDonald's death on November 28, 1951, his wife Elizabeth McDonald continued to live in Brackett House. A deed in the Storer College Papers in the Harpers Ferry National Park collections suggests that Thomas E. Robertson and Mary Brackett Robertson, Nathan and Louise Brackett's daughter, wanted to purchase the Brackett House. Although the Robertsons had originally been interested in the Paymaster's House, they revised the original deed to name Brackett House as the property they wished to purchase due to "the disgraceful and immoral conditions existing in the Lockwood house." However, a memorandum dated June 11, 1959 from former Park Architect Archie Franzen to Carlyle Crouch, the Regional Chief of Operations noted that Elizabeth McDonald was still living in Brackett House.

Storer College closed at the end of the 1954-55 academic year. Its grounds and buildings were incorporated into the Harpers Ferry National Monument on July 14, 1960 under Public Law 655. Although it is not clear when Elizabeth McDonald moved out of Brackett House, the National Park Service began a limited exterior restoration of the building in 1968 when a new Terne-coated stainless steel roof was installed.

4. Builder, contractor, supplier: Although the builder, contractor, and suppliers of materials for construction of the Brackett House are unknown, the final cost of its construction exceeded its original appropriation of \$6,000 by \$820 due to the additional cost of transporting materials from Lower Town up to Camp Hill.

5. Original plans and construction: The original plans for the Brackett House were drafted by Armory Superintendent Henry W. Clowe in July and August of 1856. Although the plans themselves have not been located, Colonel Craig returned the plans to Clowe with a letter suggesting a couple of modifications which should be made to his plans on September 5, 1856 (Craig to Clowe, September 5, 1856, Reel 19, vol. 9, p. 887).

The original plans of Brackett House were identical to its neighbor, Morrell House, which had been constructed for the Paymaster's Clerk. Each brick masonry house comprised a two-story square main building and a smaller, rectangular two-story wing which both had hipped roofs covered with slate. The main building was constructed on a center hall, double-pile plan, and it probably had portico surrounding its east entrance door. The brick service wing extended from the south side of the house and may have had one-story porches along both east and west facades. This wing most likely contained a kitchen and pantry on the first floor and a bedroom above. A full basement was constructed under the south wing, but it only extended under half of the main house.

6. Alterations and additions: In comparison to the extensive alterations which dramatically transformed all three other residences constructed for Armory officials on Camp Hill, Brackett House has undergone relatively few substantial changes. Superintendent Alfred Barbour noted in his report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1860 that "The quarters of the

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master armorer, paymaster, and clerks, have received many additions to them, to render them comfortable, and the grounds which were very rough, have been graded and improved" (*Serial No. 1079*, p. 974). In the case of Brackett House, Barbour's comments may refer only to the construction of fences and a flagstone walk on the grounds.

Although the extent of damage to the Brackett House during the Civil War is unclear, it likely suffered at the hands of troops and shelling like the other Armory residences on Camp Hill. Martha W. L. Smith, in a letter dated September 6, 1917 to President McDonald noted that Captain Young, the representative of the Ordnance Department stationed in Harpers Ferry after the war, may have repaired the fence surrounding the grounds of the Brackett House and made other repairs to the building at some point while "Mrs. Winters" occupied the building.

A photograph of the Brackett House from *Storer College Catalog* for the years 1907-08 (HF-584) is a view of the east facade of the building. A two-story portico framed the entrance to the main building. It consisted of four square pillars supporting a second-story which was surrounded by a balustrade. The roof of the portico was supported by four rounded columns which took the place of the square pillars on the upper level. A simple porch also extended along the east facade of the service wing. It consisted of a deck at ground level with four simple square posts supporting a standing-seam metal roof. Although the Brackett House was not depicted in the earlier sequence of Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance maps of Harpers Ferry, the 1933 map does indicate that the east facade of the house featured a two-story porch on the main building and a one-story porch along the service wing. The 1933 map also depicts two outbuildings at a substantial distance south from the Brackett House, just before the hill begins its steep slope down to the Shenandoah River. It is unclear how these structures functioned or when they were erected.

At some point a frame addition replaced the east porch along the east facade of the service wing. It is possible that this addition dates from the mid-1940s when extensive repairs were made to the house prior to its occupancy by former President Henry T. McDonald and his wife Elizabeth McDonald. However, this addition is not specifically mentioned in the extensive correspondence documenting the negotiations which took place between the former President and various Storer College Trustees regarding repairs to Brackett House. On July 14, 1944, McDonald notified Storer Trustee Grant Hudson that the Brackett House roof needed to be replaced immediately because it had several leaks. Although there was some confusion over how much money the Executive Committee had allocated for the repair of the roof, McDonald informed the Treasurer George B. Fraser on June 19, 1944 that he was going ahead with the proposed roof replacement. A total of \$822.25 was paid in July and August for the new roof and additional plastering and electrical work in Brackett House (Storer College Reel 116, Flash 6). On July 4, McDonald assured Hudson that he understood he could spend up to \$3000; three days later McDonald increased his estimate to \$4000. By August 24, McDonald reported to Hudson that the roof, spouting, and most of the wiring was done and that the new heating system would be installed that week. Two months later, the Trustees had agreed to allocate \$1000 for the installation of a new pump for the house, according to a letter from Trustee Harry Meyers to former President McDonald.

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Two years later, in a letter to Grant Hudson dated February 27, 1946, that the Trustees pay for the exterior of Brackett House to be painted. Apparently the Trustees refused to do so because on March 4, McDonald informed Hudson that "we" (the McDonalds) would pay for the paint job. According to another letter sent to Hudson on May 16, 1946, the McDonalds invested over \$5000 in painting Brackett House.

After acquiring the Brackett House, the National Park Service has made several alterations to the building, largely to stabilize and maintain the structure and to rehabilitate it for use as office space. In 1968, the standing seam tin roof on Brackett House was replaced with a new Terne-coated stainless steel roof by the National Park Service which consisted of standing seam metal sheathing. A new system of lead-coated copper gutters and downspouts was also constructed at this time. The National Park Service also installed an electrical system in Brackett House in 1978.

B. Historical Context:

1. The Armory's Later Years:

Originally constructed as a residence for the Superintendent's Clerk, the Brackett House and the two other Armory officers' residences designed at the same time (Paymaster's Clerk's and Master Armorer's houses) were among the last structures to be constructed prior to the Civil War and the destruction of the Armory factories. Several years later, in January 1855, Congress had voted to re-establish civilian superintendents at the federal armories. Shortly thereafter, Henry W. Clowe was appointed superintendent at the Harpers Ferry Armory. Clowe had been employed at the Armory since 1841, and on December 31, 1950 he had become a master machinist. With this promotion, Clowe was granted a dwelling on Camp Hill in which he was allowed to reside rent-free. Mildred Bushong remarked in her history of Jefferson County that Clowe was looked upon in a much more sympathetic light than most previous superintendents because he had come from within their ranks. Although this is a plausible suggestion, Bushong did not provide concrete evidence which might have distinguished Clowe's administrative style from his predecessors.

Former Park Historian Charles Snell asserted that Clowe's administration returned to the practice of favoritism which had characterized Superintendent James Stubblefield's tenure at the Armory in Harpers Ferry. An article published in the *Virginia Free Press* on November 15, 1858 seems to support Snell's assertion:

Amongst the many improvements being made at Harpers Ferry, we observe a large and handsome dwelling intended for the Master Armorer, on Shenandoah Street. It will no doubt be very comfortable and convenient. What the cost will be, must be left to conjecture. Under the Military system, proposals for all public work were issued and competition elicited, but [under the system of civilian superintendents] as 'Kissing goes by favor,' no published proposals are made, and we take it, that the contractor, whoever he may be, is not losing by the job..."

Although more specific documentation of such accusations has not been identified, it is true that Clowe would have belonged to social networks in Harpers Ferry which predated his appointment to the position of superintendent, unlike some of his recent predecessors who were not necessarily party to such local alliances prior to their transfer to Harpers Ferry to serve as military superintendents of the Armory.

Like all previous superintendents since 1816, Clowe was responsible for designing and constructing all new Armory structures. Clowe succeeded Major John Symington, the military superintendent who had implemented a comprehensive plan for the Armory and the surrounding town of Harpers Ferry which included the construction of a substantial number of buildings. Given this fact and the short length of Clowe's tenure, relatively few structures were erected during his administration. In addition, Clowe seems not to have possessed the engineering and design skills which Symington had brought to Harpers Ferry. Unlike Symington who had received formal training in engineering at West Point, Clowe's original trade was that of an armorer and machinist. When Col. Craig returned the plans Clowe had drafted for the two clerk's houses, he questioned several aspects of Clowe's designs: "there appears to be a defect in making the width of the steps at the front entrance too small, and bringing the two middle columns too close together. In putting up the building, two of which for clerks may be commenced on the hill, it will be well to correct these defects." (Craig to Clowe, Sept. 5, 1856, Reel 19, vol. 9, p. 887).

This incident cannot by itself definitively establish the quality of Clowe's architectural and skills. Nonetheless, the architectural details and craftsmanship of the Brackett House are somewhat restrained in comparison to the Paymaster's and Superintendent's houses which Symington had designed a year earlier. These differences can be explained in part by a concern to visually express the hierarchy of the Armory in the residences of its officers; the Paymaster's and Superintendent's houses had to be distinguished from the residences of their head clerks. However, unusual architectural elements such as the English basement and unique system of insulation between the basement and first floor of the Paymaster's House in addition to the more elaborate interior trim of the earlier residences suggests that the desire for visual hierarchy previously noted accompanied a qualitative difference in design and construction. Of course, such differences may have been influenced by budget limitations, particularly in the case of the Master Armorer's House whose plans Clowe had to change because its actual cost exceeded his original estimates.

In spite of these notable differences, Clowe did continue to follow the basic architectural model that Symington had previously established. The two clerks' houses used materials, fenestration patterns, and pedimented door and window frames which were similar to those in the Paymaster's and Superintendent's houses. Clowe also made a point of emphasizing the architectural similarity between the Master Armorer's House on Shenandoah Street and the four other officers' residences in his annual report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1858: "This building is of the same style as those on the Hill." In spite of the physical distance between the Armory buildings on Camp Hill and those in Lower Town, Clowe followed Symington's plan to create a unified architectural style for all significant Armory buildings. As Charles Snell has noted, Clowe also directly pursued projects which had originally been initiated by Symington such as the completion of the walls around the musket factory in

1855-56 which Symington had begun in 1846.

In November 1858, Secretary of War John B. Floyd removed Clowe from his position as superintendent and replaced him with Alfred M. Barbour. While Millard Bushong claimed that Clowe was removed from office after he quarreled with the current Congressional representative of Harpers Ferry, Charles Snell asserted that the Secretary of War had removed Clowe in response to his mismanagement of the Armory. Whatever the reason, the Ordnance Department clearly wanted to reassert its authority over Harpers Ferry.

It was not long before this change backfired on the officials in Washington; Alfred Barbour turned out to be perhaps even more of a liability to the interests of the Ordnance Department. According to Snell, Barbour had previously worked as a lawyer in Virginia. When a convention was assembled by the Virginia legislature in April 1861 to decide whether the state of Virginia should secede from the Union, Barbour was the representative from Harpers Ferry. After the ordinance of secession was passed by the Virginia convention on April 17, 1861, Barbour returned to Harpers Ferry to announce this decision at the Armory. Although Barbour had previously submitted a letter of resignation to the Ordnance Department on March 22, 1861, he had not severed his ties with the Armory, but may have, as Snell suggested, spent this time preparing to capture the Armory.

On April 19, 1861, Confederate troops seized the Armory. Unlike the armory factories and arsenal buildings in Lower Town, Brackett House and the three neighboring residences which had been designed for Armory officers survived the Civil War, although all four suffered extensive damage from shelling and canon fire on Camp Hill. Brackett House was the product of what were to be the final years of the Armory's existence, and because of the Civil War, functioned only briefly as the residence of the Superintendent's Clerk for whom it had originally been designed. While Brackett House was later to play an important role in the early development and growth of Storer College, it was nonetheless the product of the final years of the armory. The modest quality of its architecture was a testament to this fact even as it conformed to the general architectural model which had been developed earlier as part of Symington's comprehensive plan for the Armory in Harpers Ferry.

2. Rev. Nathan C. Brackett and Storer College

Although it was originally constructed to be the residence for the Superintendent's Clerk of the Armory at Harper's Ferry, Brackett House served this function for only a brief period between its completion in 1858 and the seizure of the town by Confederate troops on April 19, 1861. After the building was officially transferred to Storer College by Congress on December 15, 1868, its first occupants were Nathan C. and Louise Brackett. Although it is unclear how long the Bracketts remained in this particular residence, from the earliest days of its use by Storer College it was associated with the college's founder and first President Nathan C. Brackett. Given this association, the importance of Brackett House to Storer College must be understood in part by placing the building in the broader context of the Brackett family's involvement with Storer College.

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Nathan C. Brackett's engagement with Harpers Ferry predates his position as head of the Shenandoah Mission which was sponsored by the Freewill Baptist Home Mission Society beginning in the fall of 1865. Born in Phillips, Maine in 1838, Nathan Brackett attended Maine State Seminary in Lewiston and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1864. After graduating he served as a field agent in the U.S. Christian Commission. It is important to note that near the end of the war Brackett was assigned to General Sheridan's army which was headquartered at that time in Winchester, Virginia. According to an article published in the *Lewiston Journal* in 1906, Brackett was "the first Yankee to go up the Valley of Virginia unarmed after the war." Although it is not clear how much influence Brackett had on the Freewill Baptist Home Mission Society's decision to organize the Shenandoah Mission in the fall of 1865, it is certain that Brackett's experience in this region made him the perfect candidate to lead this venture. Soon after his marriage to Louise N. Wood on October 16, 1865, Brackett arrived in Harpers Ferry and began organizing a school for African-Americans in the former Paymaster's House on Camp Hill with the assistance of the Freedman's Bureau.

Storer College was established largely in response to the need to train African-American teachers who would be able to staff the new schools established by the Shenandoah Mission under the leadership of Nathan Brackett in Harpers Ferry and the surrounding towns including Charlestown, Shepherdstown, Martinsburg, Winchester, Front Royal, Woodstock, Harrisonburg, Staunton, and Lexington. In February 1867, Oren B. Cheney, the President of Bates College which had recently been established in the place of Brackett's *alma mater*, secured the promise of \$10,000 from John Storer of Sanford, Maine for the establishment of such a school. While matching grants were being raised, Storer College was incorporated in the fall of 1867 at which time Storer Normal School classes commenced in the Paymaster's House.

By January 2, 1868, \$10,000 had been collected and invested by Storer College Trustees to match John Storer's proposed grant. As soon as the West Virginia legislature reconvened later that month, the trustees of the proposed college submitted their application for a state charter. In spite of fervent opposition to the school by many legislators and local citizens, Storer College was granted a charter by the State of West Virginia on March 3, 1868. That same year a petition was also submitted to Congress from the Storer College stockholders requesting the transfer of the Paymaster's House and Brackett House to Storer College. On December 14, 1868 that Congress approved the transfer of these two buildings in addition to the neighboring Paymaster's Clerk's and Superintendent's houses and seven acres of land on Camp Hill to Storer College. Numerous complaints and petitions were sent to government representatives in Washington in the hopes of persuading Congress to revoke the transfer of government property to the college, but no such resolution was approved. According to Mary Brackett Robinson's history of Storer College, local opposition prevented the use of buildings other than the previously occupied Paymaster's House until December 1869. However, the Brackett family may have moved into their new quarters in the building which would later carry their name at a slightly earlier date. Robinson insisted that family legend suggests that the Bracketts may have occupied the structure prior to obtaining legal title, but it is unclear whether there is any truth to this legend.

As Nathan Brackett himself noted, the biggest challenge during the early years was to overcome the hostility and occasional outright violence expressed by the local community. Their anger was largely directed against the white Freewill Baptists who had ventured from New England to the Shenandoah Valley to create new educational opportunities for African-Americans in the area. As Nathan Brackett recalled in an article published in the *Lewiston Journal* in 1906,

Worst of all, among our own race we were regarded as moral lepers. Perhaps the hardest thing of all to bear during a period of years was the conviction in the minds of our white neighbors that we had all come to help colored people from some base or at the best sordid motive.

Nevertheless, Nathan Brackett did eventually gain the confidence and respect of many citizens of Harpers Ferry. As Josephus, Jr. noted in *The Annals of Harper's Ferry* which he wrote in 1869,

The Rev. Mr. Evachett [sic.], who is in charge of the negro schools, and is connected with the 'Storer College' enterprise, is a courteous gentleman, and is highly respected by the people generally. Whatever the cause of the prejudice against the college, or the administration of its affairs may be, it does not appear to affect Mr. Brackett's PERSONAL popularity.

The fact that Nathan Brackett had previously worked in the Shenandoah Valley, albeit for a short amount of time, may have helped him to forge alliances among certain members of the community who might have recognized him from his earlier work with the U.S. Christian Commission.

Soon after he arrived in Harpers Ferry in the fall of 1867, Nathan Brackett assumed an important position in addition to his work with the missionary schools and the establishment of Storer College which also allowed him to gain the respect of local citizens. As noted in a letter from J. Stewart which was dated June 10, 1867, Nathan Brackett was appointed Superintendent of Schools in the Shenandoah Valley. In spite of Brackett's own memories of local hostility towards himself and his colleagues, as early as April 20, 1866, an article in the *Spirit of Jefferson* remarked that "It is Mr. Brackett's design to open as many schools as possible, for we expect a larger force in the autumn, and wish to occupy as much of the Valley as we can. A better superintendent than Mr. Brackett could not be had." Through his position as county Superintendent of Free Schools, Nathan Brackett forged a link between the Storer College community and the local community which he and his successor Henry T. McDonald attempted to maintain and expand throughout their tenure.

Although Nathan Brackett is generally given much of the credit for both the establishment and the success of the college in the face of adversity, he was not alone in this venture. The staff of teachers, the majority of whom were young, single women, who assisted him both with the school in the Paymaster's House in Harpers Ferry and with establishing schools in the surrounding area played instrumental roles in the creation and survival of Storer College community through the early decades of the twentieth century. Soon after the early makeshift

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mission school was established in the Paymaster's House in the fall of 1867, Louise Wood Brackett joined her new husband in Harpers Ferry and assisted him and the other teachers with the operation of the school and the establishment of Storer College. After her death in May 1936, the Trustees of Storer College passed a resolution to acknowledge the fact that for "seventy-one years she lived in this community and her life has been spent in loving service for the people of Storer College." It appears, in fact, the Louise W. Brackett spent more time in participating in the Storer College community than any other member of her family. According to her daughter Celeste Newcomer Brackett, even after she officially retired from teaching at Storer College after her husband's death in 1910, Louise Brackett did not completely stop teaching and working in the larger Storer College community. Several times each week she taught sewing to the girls at the elementary school in Bolivar for African-American students which was the predecessor of Grandview School and effectively used as the teaching laboratory for Storer College students pursuing degrees in education.

Lura Brackett, Nathan's sister, was also an active member of the Storer College faculty. According to Celeste Brackett Newcomer's founder's day speech which she delivered on February 26, 1944, Lura Brackett first arrived in Harpers Ferry in the fall of 1869, after completing her normal school training in Farmington, Maine. Known to the students at Storer College as Miss Lue, she taught for many years and was active in Storer College life until her death in 1925 at the age of seventy-five. After construction of Myrtle Hall (later known as Mosher Hall) was completed in 1879, Lura Brackett moved into the dormitory and supervised the young women who lived there. In addition, she held the position of principal for the women students, and became the Treasurer of Storer College after her brother's death in 1910.

The important support and assistance that Nathan C. Brackett received throughout his lengthy tenure at Storer College must be acknowledged, particularly on the part of other members of the Brackett family. The entire Brackett family, with whom the Brackett House continues to be associated, played a central role not only in the establishment of Storer College, but also in its subsequent expansion. The connection between the Bracketts and the physical structure of the college continued not the least through the association of their name with Brackett House and later with Brackett Hall. As Henry T. McDonald observed in the speech he delivered on June 6, 1938 while accepting the portrait of Nathan C. Brackett by Washington, D.C. artist Garnet Jox on behalf of the Storer College community, "these buildings and lovely grounds, with the newly named Brackett Hall, are physical reminders" of this legacy.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: As originally constructed, the Brackett House was virtually identical to the neighboring Morrell House. These two houses which were designed for high-ranking clerks at the Armory are also similar in materials and design to the Master Armorer's House which was designed at the same time by Superintendent Henry W. Clowe. Comprising two floors and a partial basement, the residence was a brick masonry building divided into a main square section with a narrow wing projecting from its south facade. Brackett House

shares many characteristics with the series of five residences for Armory officers constructed immediately prior to the Civil War. All of these houses featured similar architectural details such as porticos and pedimented door and window frames.

2. Condition of Fabric: Good exterior with fair to poor interior - peeling paint, unprotected walls, and water damage.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Brackett House comprises a two-story, square main section constructed on a modified four-square plan with a small stairhall at the east entrance. There is a narrower two-story wing and frame kitchen section on east facade (see HABS drawing).

2. Foundations: Above grade, the foundation walls are stone masonry in various combinations of coursed and dressed rubble. They extend above grade to the first floor line and terminate in a sloping stone water table.

3. Walls: The brick walls are laid in common bond (5:1). Although much of it has been removed, traces of white paint remain on the exterior brick walls of the Brackett House.

4. Structural system, framing: The Brackett House is a wall-bearing brick masonry building comprising two stories and a basement. The roof of the main building features a single king-post in the center. A longitudinal tie-beam spans the roof between the north and south walls of the main building. It is placed just east of the central partition wall which runs between the two fireplaces. Six trusses run between the king post, the four corners of the building and the ends of the longitudinal tie-beam. Each truss is attached to a brace. A large collar-beam is suspended from the middle of the trusses and supported by a series of struts. The floor joists run between the east and west exterior walls.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The National Park Service constructed a one-story wood portico at the east entrance to the main building which is identical to the east portico on the Morrell House. It was probably also completed with the assistance of Harpers Ferry Job Corps by October 1974. The one-story wood portico at the east entrance to the main building is constructed on a raised wood deck mounted on brick foundations. One large stone slab in front of the portico deck functions as a step up to the deck. Four square pillars with capitals and two pilasters against the building support a plain cornice and sloping roof covered with metal sheeting.

A narrow balcony with an ornamental cast iron railing is located on the north elevation, projecting from the second floor. The deck is constructed of short boards mounted on three joists and supported by four large ornamental cast iron brackets. This balcony was most likely part of the original construction.

6. Chimneys: The Brackett House has three chimneys, two in the main building and one in the wing. Two brick chimneys are located north and south of the hipped roof peak, while a third is located at the south end of the wing. All three chimneys are rectangular, straight

stacks with corbelled lips. Lead coated copper flashing and counter flashing was installed around all three chimneys when the roof covering was replaced by the National Park Service in 1968.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The east entrance, four-panelled door in the main building has side lights, top lights in a rectangular transom, and a large cut stone sill. It is surrounded by a pedimented frontispiece with pilasters which have a large groove running up the center. [west facade, door to frame kitchen addition]

b. Windows and shutters: Double-hung, wood sash windows of six over six lights are surmounted by jack arches and mounted above dressed stone sills which have been cut to allow rainwater to run off them. Although the windows on the first and second stories of the original building have the same form, they are slightly different in size. The first-floor windows in the main building are somewhat taller than those on the second floor. The first-floor windows in the wing are the same size as the second-floor windows in the main building, while the upper windows in the wing are slightly smaller.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Both the main portion and the wing of the building have hipped roofs, although the larger roof meets in a single point whereas the smaller roof has a ridge line. In 1968, a Terne-coated stainless steel roof was installed over both sections of the building by the National Park Service.

b. Cornice, eaves: The brick cornice is composed of course of dentils surmounted by two corbelled courses, one of headers and one of stretchers. At the top, an additional course of headers is faced with a wood board. Steel corner plates are set into the first course of headers at all corners of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement: Unlike Morrell, the south end was later excavated to find short ceilings in one room.

b. First floor: The first floor of the main building is divided into five rooms, three along the east facade with the square entrance hall in the center off the east portico and two larger rooms along the west facade. The west rooms contain two fireplaces which are no longer in use. The large opening in their shared partition wall which used to frame folding doors has been filled with plasterboard. The wing may be reached through a door in the southwest room of the main building. A short hallway leads to a winding staircase connecting to the second floor, a bathroom under the

staircase, and a large room in the south half of the wing. The frame addition on the east facade comprises a large kitchen which may be reached through a door in the southeast room of the main building. A small vestibule is located at the south end of the frame addition.

c. Second floor: The second floor was originally constructed on the same plan as the first floor. However, a small bathroom has been created between the two rooms along the west facade. A balcony is located on the north facade which may only be accessed through a window in the middle of the balcony. A door in the southwest room of the main building opens onto three stairs leading down to the second-floor rooms in the wing. The wing is divided into two rooms with a narrow stairhall along the east exterior wall.

2. Stairways: The Brackett House has two staircases, one in the entrance hall of the main building and the second in the wing. The staircase in the main building is a dog-leg staircase without intermediate landing in a run of twenty-one steps. An octagonal newel post sits at the base of a balustrade with a rounded railing, while two shorter, chamfered newel posts cap the balustrade at the top of the stairs. The balustrade continues on the second floor along both sides of the stairwell.

3. Flooring: Carpet in most rooms and linoleum in kitchen addition.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling of the original building were plaster. The northwest room on the first floor of the main building has a plaster cornice around its perimeter.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Like the main entrance door, the four-paneled doors opening off the entrance hall on the first floor and the door leading to the service wing have pedimented frontispieces with pilasters which have a large groove running up the center.

b. Windows: In a design similar to the interior door frames, the first-floor windows in the main building have large, plain pediments supported by grooved pilasters which extend to the floor and enclose two wood panels below each window opening. These windows have wood sills and narrow, wood splayed reveals. The second-floor windows in the main building have plain pediments, simple wood sills, and narrow, wood splayed reveals.

6. Decorative features and trim: Four fireplaces exist in the main building, one in each of the northwest and southwest rooms on the first and second floors. All four fireplaces are brick with brick hearths and are surmounted by heavy, plain wood mantelpieces.

7. Lighting: The electrical system in Brackett House was completely updated in the first few months of 1978 by the National Park Service.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The Brackett House is located on a wooded bluff which slopes sharply south of the building down to the Shenandoah River. Before the house was erected, Fillmore Street had just been graded and improved. In his annual report dated June 30, 1858, Superintendent Clowe noted that improvements had also been made to the grounds of the Brackett and Morrell Houses: "121 perches of dry wall and 132 yards of earth excavation, for a drain, [had been] built on the dividing line, or ravine, separating the clerks' quarters on Camp Hill." In total, 2193 yards had been excavated and filled to improve the grounds surrounding these two residences (*Serial No. 976*, p. 1319). By the end of June 1859, the grounds of the Brackett House and the neighboring Morrell House had been enclosed with fencing constructed of locust posts, oak string pieces, and yellow pine paling (*Serial No. 1079*, p. 974).

Although it may have been repaired by Captain Young, the Ordnance Department representative in Harpers Ferry after the Civil War, this fence was still standing in the early years of Storer College. According to letter from Martha W. L. Smith to President McDonald dated September 6, 1917, when the Brackett House was transferred to the college, "there was a fence enclosing a yard to the Brackett House on a line...with the end of the flag stone walk." This walk had been originally installed between September 1858 and June 1859, after grading and improvement of the grounds had been completed, as Superintendent Alfred M. Barbour noted in his annual report from 1859 (*Serial No. 1079*, p. 974). At that point, two hundred and twenty-four feet of stone pavement had been laid at the residence which would become known as the Brackett House.

2. Outbuildings: Although according to Superintendent Alfred M. Barbour's annual report a brick outbuilding and a wood frame stable had been constructed on the grounds of the Morrell House by June 30, 1859, evidence suggests that no outbuildings were originally constructed for the Brackett House. In a letter to Col. Craig dated September 17, 1858, Clowe submitted a proposal for an additional \$1500 to be used to construct a rain water cistern (\$200), whitewash fences on the grounds (\$75), and erect three stables and two smoke/storage houses for the residences of the paymaster, the master armorer, and two clerks (\$1225) (Clowe to Craig, September 27, 1858, Photostat Collection, vol. 3, p. 84). In his historical report on the Brackett House, former Park Historian Philip Smith claimed that Craig did not approve these expenditures in 1858. Although funds were allocated in 1860 for outbuildings to be erected on the grounds of Brackett House, they were not completed before the Civil War broke out in 1861.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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November 28, 1969; First floor plan (57-5), undated; Second floor plan (57-6), undated.

National Park Service, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, A. W. Franzen, Park Architect, Brackett House Porch (57-7), undated.

B. Early views:

Photographs and prints, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park collection, U.S. National Park Service

HF-584	Brackett House, from Storer College catalog, 1907-1908
HF-282	Looking towards the Gap from Camp Hill, Harpers Ferry, 1915
HF-288a	Aerial view of Harpers Ferry, Camp Hill and Lower Town, 1932
HF-292	Aerial view from Camp Hill showing Storer College, 1932
NHF-3889	Brackett House, March 1956
NHF-4003	Brackett House, ca. 1956
NHF-1779	Brackett House, east facade, January 13, 1958
NHF-2204	Brackett House, south and east facades, March 1963
NHF-3141	Brackett House, east facade, March 16, 1968
NHF-3135	Brackett House, east facade, December 8, 1968
NHF-3462	Brackett House, east facade, October 1974
NHF-3489	Brackett House, east facade, January 1975
NHF-3490	Brackett House, east porch, January 1975
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National Historical Park

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and the National Park Service, Donald W. Campbell, Superintendent, under the direction of Peter Dessauer, Park Architect. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, Chief, under the direction of Paul Dolinsky, Chief of HABS; with the assistance of HABS Architect Frederick J. Lindstrom and HABS Historian Catherine C. Lavoie. The first phase of the project was completed during the summer of 1994. The second phase of the project was completed during the summer of 1995 at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park by project supervisor Elizabeth Loudon (Texas Institute of Technology) and field foreman Mary Ellen Strain (Florida State University) with architecture technicians Jennifer Andrews (University of Arizona), Árpád Furu (Budapest Technical University, through US-ICOMOS), Burke Greenwood (Miami University), Randy Plaisance (Tulane University), and Barbara Stein (Harvard University). The project historian was Sheila R. Crane (Northwestern University). Chief Park Historian Bruce Noble and Project Historians Patricia Chickering, Michael Jenkins, and Mary Johnson provided invaluable assistance and a useful orientation to the historical resources of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The park's historical database, which has been developed by historians working under a cooperative agreement with the University of Maryland, has been an essential resource for all historical reports produced for this project. Photographs were produced by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer.

ADDENDUM TO:
REVEREND NATHAN BRACKET HOUSE
(Building No. 57)
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Fillmore Street
Harpers Ferry
Jefferson County
West Virginia

HABS WV-283
HABS WVA, 19-HARF, 33-

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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Washington, DC 20240-0001