

Storer College, Cook Hall
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Harpers Ferry
Jefferson County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-277-E

HABS
WVA,
19-HARF,
32-E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO:
STORER COLLEGE, COOK HALL
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
252 McDowell Street
Harpers Ferry
Jefferson County
West Virginia

HABS WV-277-E
WVA, 19-HARF, 32-E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO STORER COLLEGE, COOK HALL (Permelia Eastman Cook Hall)

HABS No. WV-277-E

Location: Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, West Virginia.

Present Owner: National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center

Present Occupants: National Park Service staff.

Present Use: Offices.

Historian: James A. Jacobs, HABS

Significance: Constructed in 1939-40 and named after its principal benefactor, Permelia Eastman Cook Hall holds significance as the last new building constructed on the campus of Storer College, a historically black college in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, which ceased operations in 1955. This closure was, in part, an ironic and unfortunate outcome of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Storer College had been founded by northern Baptists in 1867 primarily for the education of newly emancipated slaves. Although from the outset Storer situated its curriculum on liberal arts coursework, in the 1880s it was expanded to include industrial education for both men and women. Such training for female students at Storer included cooking, sewing, and general domestic management, comprising preparation for the few areas of paid work at the time considered appropriate for women in general, and black women in particular. With construction funds and project oversight coming largely from women in Baptist missionary groups whose membership hailed mostly from Northern and Midwestern states, the building of Cook Hall is part of a tangled narrative providing insight on such compelling issues as race, gender, education, and religion in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America.

Cook Hall's essential visual qualities are derived from the local gray-green stone used for its walls and the Colonial Revival architectural elements that enliven its front façade—both the material and stylistic aspects of the design had precedent in other Storer College buildings. The attractive and well-constructed building was one of those reused by the National Park Service after a congressional appropriation in 1962 allowed the agency to purchase the defunct school's historic campus for an expansion of the Harpers Ferry National Monument (renamed Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in 1963). Plans surrounding this acquisition also included the establishment of an eastern training center for National Park Service employees. Towards this end, Cook Hall and Anthony

Memorial Hall—the centerpiece of the Storer campus—were renovated in 1962-63, as, respectively, a dormitory and a classroom and administration building for what was dedicated in 1964 as the “Stephen T. Mather Training Center.” Although Cook Hall no longer functions as a dormitory, it is still used as offices for the National Park Service and is currently undergoing an exterior restoration.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of erection:** 1939-40.¹
2. **Architect:** Cook Hall was adapted from plans used for the construction of the domestic science building at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which had been finished in 1937. Harriet Palmer, member of the Storer board of trustees and the chairperson of the building committee, visited Bacone in November 1939 and wrote to Storer president Henry T. McDonald: “The D. S. building at Bacone is a very attractive one, built of stone, and it would be perfectly at home on the Storer campus if it were possible to pick it [up] and set it down there.”² Palmer approached Bacone College, asking whether Storer could use the plans for Cook Hall, conveying this scheme to McDonald in a January 1940 letter:

Immediately after our meeting in December I wrote to Bacone, asking if we might use the plans with the changes suggested by the committee, and inquiring what the cost would be...I received a reply...giving us permission very graciously to use the plans, and there will be no charge at all for them unless the architect there is called on to do some work, in which case there will be a nominal charge. I thought the attitude was very fine indeed; and, of course I am delighted at the saving of expense.³

Because of this transaction, at least the front elevation and general form of Cook Hall at Storer College in West Virginia, was a duplicate of Sally Journeycake Hall at Bacone

¹ “Annual Minutes (1913-1944),” Storer College Board of Trustees (hereafter **MBT**), 7 Oct. 1939, and “Report of Henry T. McDonald, President, to the Board of Trustees of Storer College, 5 Oct. 1940. The Annual Minutes are part of record group A&M 1322, “Storer College Records,” held in the West Virginia History and Regional Collection, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia. Duplicates on microfilm at the library and archive of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (hereafter **HAFE**). In this history, McDonald’s annual reports to the board will be referred to simply as **President’s Report**. With a few exceptions, which will be noted, these more-or-less annual documents are found within the Trustees Annual Minutes, 1913-1944 (Reel #130, HAFE).

² Harriet W. Palmer to Henry T. McDonald, 27 Nov. 1939. *All correspondence between McDonald and Palmer can be found in A&M 1322, (Reel #117, HAFE)*. See Section I:A:6, “Original plans and construction,” for more about the design of Cook Hall.

³ Palmer to McDonald, 22 Jan. 1940.

College in Oklahoma.⁴ At this time, the architect for the prototype at Bacone is not readily known, although inquiries at the school suggest that H. H. Niemann might be the individual responsible for the design.⁵ He was the architect for the school's contemporary Ataloa Lodge (1932) and McCoy Hall (1937), the latter of which, while larger, shares certain physical affinities with Journeycake Hall. While a specific name is presently lost, the architect is known to have worked with the domestic science instructor in planning the facility.⁶ The *Muskogee Phoenix* described the anticipated building at Bacone in an April 11, 1936 article:

The building will be in early American style... a two-story affair, 85 by 65 feet. There are two large classrooms in one wing but the main section is built in exact replica of the most modern home with all [the] electric and steam appliances [needed] to provide students with a first hand knowledge of the modest modern methods of home management.⁷

The description suggests a T-shaped building, the same as Cook Hall. The entrance facades of both buildings are nearly identical and share the same 85'-0" dimension. The depth of Cook Hall is roughly 8'-0" less than Journeycake Hall, a difference likely necessary because of the steep drop-off of the Storer site. A letter from Palmer to McDonald casually summarized some of the other changes the Storer board of trustees wanted to make to the design, including: "two doors in front to be alike, and also the windows; the rooms in the basement to be reversed, and a room provided in the extension at the back."⁸ The last item noted might refer to the boiler room located in a sub-basement area under the rear wing, which has at-grade access because of the sloping site.

3. Owners:

15 December 1869—United States Government (War Department) to the "Trustees of Storer College."⁹ An Act of Congress of 15 December 1868 "authorized and directed" the Secretary of War "to convey by deed" the former U. S. Armory property on Camp Hill in Harpers Ferry to "Storer College, an Institution of higher learning chartered by the State of West Virginia."¹⁰ The property encompassed four residences once

⁴ See contemporary photograph of Journeycake Hall on the Bacone College website, www.bacone.edu.

⁵ Frances Donelson, head librarian, Bacone College, to James A. Jacobs, electronic correspondence, 31 Jan. 2008.

⁶ Palmer to McDonald, 27 Nov. 1939.

⁷ As transcribed in Donelson to Jacobs, 31 Jan. 2008.

⁸ Palmer to McDonald, 22 Jan. 1940.

⁹ United States Government to the Trustees of Storer College, 15 Dec. 1869, Deed Book 4, beginning page 575, Jefferson County Court House, Charles Town, WV, transcription of deed located in the Tract 106-06 folder, Natural Resource and Lands Program, HAFE.

¹⁰ Ibid.

occupied by high-ranking armory employees and associated land totaling seven-and-one-half acres, all of which would comprise the school's entire physical plant until a campus slowly took shape in the vicinity of the westernmost of the houses.¹¹ This was the same group of buildings "which [previously, in December 1868] had...been assigned by the War Department to the Bureau of Refugee, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands for educational purposes."¹² In 1872, the four former dwellings and the newly-constructed Lincoln Hall (boys dormitory), all "with furniture," as well as the seven-and-one-half acres of land on which they sat were valued in total at \$30,000.¹³

28 August 1962—Declaration of Taking, United States of America versus President and Trustees of Storer College.¹⁴ The return of the Storer College campus to government ownership after the school failed to reopen after the 1954-55 academic year does not appear to have been a situation in any way hostile; rather, it is likely a "taking" only occurred in order to effectively evaluate Storer's real property so that the trustees could be appropriately compensated. The land comprising the Storer College campus had well more than doubled to approximately seventeen acres since the original transfer of seven-and-one-half acres from the War Department to the school in 1869.¹⁵ Later land acquisitions appear to have centered mainly around the westernmost armory residence, which had been transformed into the campus centerpiece, Anthony Memorial Hall (1881-82; rebuilt 1928), and the "campus" remained a discontinuous entity with non-adjacent parcels stretching out eastward between Fillmore and Cliff streets.¹⁶ The four armory houses had been joined by a number of other buildings, most substantially by Mosher Hall (1876), Anthony Library (1903; 1953), "John Brown's Fort" (acquired 1909); Brackett Hall (1909-10); and Cook Hall (1939-40). The "just compensation" for the campus property in 1962 was set at \$205,201, a figure a bit lower than the "fair market" estimate provided by one of the two companies invited to consider the value and

¹¹ Storer College also owned a nearby 150-acre farm, which had been purchased by the Free Will Baptists as an alternative campus location if congressional lobbying for the transfer of the armory property was not successful. "Smallwood Farm" was retained as part of the financial backing for the school. See: Burke, *American Phoenix*, 67.

¹² United States Government to the Trustees of Storer College, 15 Dec. 1869.

¹³ Storer College "Financial Statement," 1872, in the "Records of the Commission for the Promoting [*sic*] of Education in the South," Feb. 1867-Jun. 1876, A&M 1322 (Reel #131, HAFE).

¹⁴ Declaration of Taking, 28 Aug. 1962, United States of America versus President and Trustees of Storer College, photocopy in Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

¹⁵ Real Estate Research Corporation (Donald C. McCandless, Senior Analyst), "Appraisal report on the property of Storer College and certain other properties located in the Town of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia," 2 Mar. 1962, Washington, D.C., 9, for acreage of the campus. See also Richard B. Hall, "Land and Buildings of Storer College and Four Privately Owned Properties," 15 Feb. 1962, Washington, D.C., both documents in Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

¹⁶ See related maps in Hall and Real Estate Research Corporation.

Melvin Strider Furniture Store
Hagerstown Nursery
Sears Roebuck & Co.
The Fyr-Fyter Co.
Chamberlain Company
Horowitz Bros.
Bacon Vincent Co.
The Edw. Malley Co.
Hyman Viener

The stone used for Cook Hall was quarried onsite. In an October 1939 letter to building committee chairperson Harriet Palmer, Storer president Henry McDonald, wrote:

I am very certain in my own mind that the building should be constructed of our native stone as to conform with most of the buildings on the campus. The college has a stone quarry of [a] fine type of building stone and this quarry is located within a hundred feet of where the building will be located.²¹

Palmer commented in response:

I was glad to know also the location of the quarry, as I had been wondering where that could be. The expense of getting the stone to the site for the building should not be very great, I should think, unless it has to be taken around by the road. Do I understand that the only expense will be getting it out and hauling? In other words, do we pay the college for the stone? I want to be very sure of things as we go along, so as not to get into deep water.²²

The cost of the stone noted on itemized lists that McDonald provided Palmer during the building campaign was modest when compared with those associated with other elements of the construction, suggesting that payments were only made for the quarrying and hauling of the material. The savings from having an onsite quarry of good stone cannot be overestimated. As McDonald reflected in a 1941 letter to Palmer: "everyone is amazed that this building constructed from stone of such fine quality could be constructed for the price it cost us."²³

²¹ McDonald to Palmer, 19 Oct. 1939.

²² Palmer to McDonald, 9 Nov. 1939.

²³ McDonald to Palmer, 17 Jan. 1941.

6. Original plans and construction:

Introduction

As early as 1913, Elizabeth M. McDonald, wife of the long-time college president and later Dean of Women, declared that a new domestic science hall was the “most imperative” of “our greatest needs.”²⁴ Two decades later, the campus remained without a modern building dedicated to this purpose. Although the college had remodeled the former gym of Brackett Hall into a “new and well equipped domestic science laboratory” in 1934, an observer noted only one year later that a “domestic arts building” was the first among a group of “outstanding additions” necessary for Storer’s “already excellent curriculum and equipment.”²⁵ Happily, by December 1940, president McDonald could write to building committee chair Palmer:

May I express again, as I did in a recent letter, my sincere appreciation for the very constant and earnest attention to every possible detail in the building of Cook Hall, which you have generously given. We believe that it has been such a work of genuine love and devotion on your part...I do express the sentiments of the immediate college family, as well as those of old students, who come back and with unvarying expressions of great pleasure, inspect and admire the beautiful Cook Hall.²⁶

The neat, attractive and functional design of Storer College’s latest campus addition belied some of its far-flung origins, and a strong, if still courteous, clash of personalities between McDonald and Palmer, the project’s major movers.

Henry T. McDonald became president of Storer College in 1899 and would hold that post until resigning at the end of 1944. His tenure saw repeated and earnest actions toward the expansion and modernization of the Storer campus and the school’s curriculum; however, these admirable efforts must be balanced with his underlying “paternalistic belief that blacks should be educated by whites, who were fitted for the task by both position and heritage.”²⁷ McDonald’s long presidency, no less his marriage to Elizabeth Mosher, the

²⁴ Elizabeth M. McDonald, “Our Latest Blessings—Our Greatest Needs,” *The Missionary Helper* [Published Monthly by the Free Baptist Woman’s Missionary Society] 34 (Mar. 1913): 71, A&M 1322 (Reel #125, HAFE).

²⁵ *Catalogue of Storer College, 1867-1938: A Junior College for Colored Youth with Pre-Medical, State Normal, Academic, Musical and Industrial Departments*, 1937-1938, 21, A&M 1322 (Reel #126, HAFE), for remodeling; Clara D. Pinkham, *From Cabin to College*, nd (ca. 1935), 10-11, A&M 1322 (Reel #124, HAFE), for new building.

²⁶ McDonald to Palmer, undated (Dec. 1940).

²⁷ Dawne Raines Burke, “Storer College: A Hope for Redemption in the Shadow of Slavery, 1865-1955,” diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, 2004, 406. This work was later edited by Michael Slaven and privately published as: *An American Phoenix: A History of Storer College from Slavery to Desegregation, 1865-1955*. These works present a full narrative of Storer’s establishment, growth, decline, and closure, in particular providing an understanding of the forces impacting education for black Americans in the decades following the Civil War.

daughter of an important early trustee, created conditions where he likely believed his influence and decisions about the school were paramount to those held by others.²⁸ This self-awareness would have made his professional life an increasingly difficult one as Storer relied more and more heavily on outside support for not only expansion, but also for basic operations.

In contrast to McDonald, Harriet Palmer's association with Storer College began only about a year before the planning of Cook Hall began in earnest. In a July 1938 letter, Palmer's response to McDonald's recent notification of her election to the board of trustees, suggested that she planned on being quite active in her new post, commenting:

Thank you for your invitation to visit [*sic*] Storer. I am looking forward to attending the Board meeting of October 1st, and I shall come prepared to learn all I can about the school during that time. Later I shall hope to make you a little visit. I am very much interested in our Negro schools and happy to have this opportunity to see the 'wheels go around' at Storer. I hope to be able to be something more than just another trustee in the days to come.²⁹

Harriet Palmer would not have to wait long in making good on her observed desire "to be something more than just another trustee." Her nomination to the board of trustees occurred because of Storer's historical and continued affiliation with "Free Will" or "American" Baptists and their varied mission societies.³⁰ Although women had been among Storer's leadership and teaching staff since the school's earliest days, in 1937 the board of trustees encouraged the formation "...of a Board of Women, who shall cooperate with the Trustees, and have special care of the woman's part of the College, not only to make suggestions but also to supply the funds to improve the property."³¹ Established at a board meeting in September 1937, what became known as the "Women's Commission" met for the first time in June 1938.³² A well-off resident of New Haven, Connecticut with connections to women's societies associated with the northern

²⁸ Burke, *An American Phoenix*, 109, 134.

²⁹ Palmer to McDonald, 22 Jul. 1938.

³⁰ Relatively independent Free Will Baptist congregations, institutions, and societies, were more centrally organized into the "Northern Baptist Convention" in 1907. In 1845, southern Baptists had departed from a loose national, mission-based association known as the "Triennial Convention" because of the active and accelerating involvement of northern Free Will Baptists in the antislavery movement. The geographic split was never healed and the two major Baptist conventions have evolved into entirely distinct subsets within the denomination, with the Southern Baptist Convention over time becoming far larger and—given its particularly conservative theology and strict stance on social issues—far better known. In 1950, the Northern Baptist Convention renamed itself the "American Baptist Convention" before later becoming American Baptist Churches, USA (1972). It is generally understood to be a mainline protestant denomination and unsurprisingly also counts a majority of African-American Baptist churches within its ranks.

³¹ President's Report, 3 Jun. 1939, A&M 1322 (Reel #124, HAFE).

³² *Ibid.*

development potential of the property.¹⁷ The reason given in the “declaration of taking” for the transaction centered on its requisite value to the public: “these parcels of land are needed in connection with the proper administration, preservation, and development of the Harpers Ferry National Monument for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”¹⁸

4. Original and subsequent occupants:

1940-55 Classroom and dormitory space for Storer College
1955-1962 Occupied in part as rented apartments, possibly vacant at times¹⁹
1963-present National Park Service

5. Builder, contractors, suppliers:²⁰

H. D. Desch	construction superintendent
James Vickers	superintendent work during “absence of Mr. Desch”
John Newcomer	sand and hauling
John Fritts	hauling
J. L. Pearson	masonry (laying of stone)
Viener Bros.	beams and iron
Continental Clay Co.	brick
A. Kaplon	scaffolding
James Cassell	cement; plumbing and heating; cistern and pump
John Newcomer	sand and stone cistern
Miller Liskey Electric Co.	electrical work
Geo. W. Poling	“cutting letters”
The Savitt Company	silver
Leiter Bros. Inc.	curtains and hangings
Beckley-Cardy Co.	teacher’s desk
Mr. Schaul	tuning and work on piano
Montgomery Ward and Co.	ice cream freezer
Elkhart Bros.	fire hose
B & O Railroad Company	freight
American Floor Surfacing Co. (Huntington Laboratories)	floor seal
Standard Lime and Stone Co.	
Valley Hardware Co.	
Whitmore Lumber Company	

¹⁷ Donald C. McCandless, Senior Analyst, Real Estate Research Corporation, to Hillory A. Tolson, Assistant Director, National Park Service, 2 Mar. 1962, letter included at the beginning of the “Appraisal report.”

¹⁸ Declaration of Taking, 28 Aug. 1962. See Section I:A:7, “Alterations and additions,” for more about the NPS purchase.

¹⁹ Hall, 41, and documents in the Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section is drawn from itemized lists that Henry McDonald sent to Harriet Palmer dated 16 Oct. 1940 and 11 Dec. 1940, A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE). In addition to naming various individuals and firms involved in the project, the lists also detailed the dollar costs.

convention of Baptists, Harriet Palmer's nomination to the board was a logical choice toward advancing the intended purpose of the Women's Commission.

The Benefactors

No major building had been constructed at Storer College since the burning and replacement of Lincoln Hall in 1909-10 (dedicated as "Brackett Hall") and constant financial strain experienced by the college made it unlikely that any new building would be constructed at Storer without substantial outside assistance. Donations for a domestic science hall were being received for well over a decade before the occurrence of major pledges from one individual and two associations in 1927. McDonald used the school's fiftieth anniversary as an opportunity to ask the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society (FBWMS) for funds with which to construct a domestic science building. Permelia Eastman Cook, a member of the society, promised a \$15,000 donation if it was matched by the combined efforts of that organization along with the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS).³³ The matching funds were assembled within a year and referred to as the "Golden Jubilee Fund;" however, in the end, it seems that only the WABHMS contributed to the additional \$15,000, perhaps because the FBWMS claimed their member's extremely generous personal gift as enough support from them.³⁴

Although one of Storer College's single largest financial donors during its eighty-eight year existence, the details of Permelia Eastman Cook's life remain mostly in the shadows.³⁵ She apparently was from or, at least at the time of her 1931 death, a resident of, Valley Springs, South Dakota.³⁶ While an admirable approach to charitable acts, her conjoined generosity and relative obscurity unsurprisingly generated curiosity from Storer president Henry McDonald. In 1936, he wrote to a friend of Cook's, inquiring:

You are one of the very few who knew Mrs Pamela [*sic*] Eastman Cook intimately. Storer College is one of the direct beneficiaries of her thrift and belief in the worth of folks. We have here no very adequate information about Mrs. Cook. And I am wondering whether you can direct me to some printed materials, which will give such information. I should like to have it to be filed away.³⁷

³³ Burke, "Storer College," 271-72.

³⁴ President's Report, 7 May 1928, A&M 1322 (Reel #130, HAFE).

³⁵ Her name was even routinely misspelled as "Pamelia" in documents found in the Storer College records, the assumption being that the name carved into the building itself is the correct one.

³⁶ "Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Va.: Financial report for period which began July 1st and ended Sept. 30, 1937," 21, A&M 1322 (Reel #114, HAFE). The year of Cook's death is suggested by information on this page related to "Building and Equipment Funds for Domestic Science Building," which refers to funds from "Cook, Estate of Permelia Eastman, 1931."

³⁷ McDonald to Mrs. L. M. P. Durgin, 14 Jan. 1936, HFT-00059, 1936- Sep. 1939, Storer College Collection, HAFE.

It is not known whether McDonald ever received a reply and attempts to find additional information on Cook during this study have not proven fruitful. It was fortunate that her name was inscribed in the lintel over the center, first-floor windows as it remains associated with the building despite the passage of eighty years and changes in ownership and function.

The two organizations involved with funding Cook Hall—known at the time of construction as the Free Baptist Woman’s Missionary Society and the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society—had been involved with Storer College to some degree since its establishment in 1867.³⁸ Both were associations that represented the domestic and international missionary efforts of women within the loose coalition of Free Will Baptist congregations and organizations that later comprised the Northern Baptist Convention. The FBWMS had been independently founded as the Free Baptist Female Mission Society in 1847, and saw one name change before becoming the Free Will Baptist Women’s Missionary Society in 1873. The WABHMS was an 1877 spin-off of the Free [Will] Baptist Home Mission Society, which had been founded in the early 1830s.³⁹ Both the FBWMS and the Free [Will] Baptist Home Mission Society contributed to the establishment of the Shenandoah Mission at Harpers Ferry, which was established in 1865 and was the direct forerunner of Storer College.⁴⁰

Although the FBWMS, through the generosity of Permelia Eastman Cook, and the WABHMS, had amassed \$30,000 for the new domestic science building by May 1928, it is not known why the building was not constructed at that time.⁴¹ One possible explanation was the destruction of Anthony Memorial Hall by a fire that had occurred the previous October. In his report to the board of trustees in May 1928, McDonald communicated that the building was only insured for \$14,900 and the school would need another \$35,000 for full replacement.⁴² It seems that the leadership at Storer did not use or were prevented from using the funds amassed for a domestic science building. Yet, their time, energy, and any additional resources would have undoubtedly been directed towards replacing the college’s principal building and psychological center without which the school could not function. Anthony Hall was largely rebuilt by the end of 1928, but the financial reverberation on an institution that in general operated under a economic cloud was probably felt for a number of years.⁴³ The subsequent onset of the

³⁸ The names of both are variously called “Women’s” and “Woman’s” societies in the Storer College records and in other documents. In both cases, “Woman’s” is the correct term.

³⁹ Later known as the American Home Baptist Mission Society, before becoming part of an organization called “National Ministries” in 1972 (www.nationalministries.org).

⁴⁰ Burke, *An American Phoenix*, 16-17.

⁴¹ President’s Report, 7 May 1928.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Catalogue of Storer College, 1867-1938*, 21.

Great Depression only intensified uncertainty and lowered morale. In his 1934 annual report, McDonald expressed worry to the board of trustees: “The present economic outlook for the coming school year does not lead me to be over[ly] optimistic.”⁴⁴

These severe pressures as well as the simultaneous, all-encompassing preoccupation of the Storer College leadership, teachers, alumni, and students about accreditation and transformation of the school’s curriculum all conspired to delay the construction of a new domestic science building. A 1937 financial report for Storer showed that the \$30,000 raised a decade earlier for the domestic science building had even increased with interest on both Permelia Eastman Cook’s donation held by the school and the funds earmarked, but not yet transferred, by the WABHMS. In October 1939, Harriet Palmer informed the board that the WABHMS was “ready to turn over to Storer College the \$15,000, allocated to the college several years ago from the Golden Jubilee Fund, which sum of money together with the \$15,000, held by the College, a gift of Pamela [*sic*] E. Cook, is to be used in the erection of a Domestic Science Building.”⁴⁵ A more favorable national economic outlook toward the end of the 1930s probably jump-started the long-awaited construction project; however, McDonald’s ambition to expand the school and further modernize its curriculum put him on a direct course for conflict with Harriet Palmer as the project unfolded.

The Design

The two schemes considered for Cook Hall at the end of 1939 very much mirrored an understanding of the school by the two individuals most responsible for its design and construction. Henry McDonald had four decades of experience and leadership at Storer and fully comprehended both the pressing need to expand the campus plant for future survival and the scarcity of resources available for such an expansion. As only newly acquainted with the school and lacking the personal investment of McDonald, Harriet Palmer could be expected to approach problems facing Storer more objectively, yet her lack of deep insight about the school perhaps also unconsciously resulted in a lack of awareness about critical elements necessary for its survival. Her specific task of representing women’s concerns at Storer on the board led to her highly competent management of the campaign for a new domestic science building; however, this competence and her uncompromising movement forward toward a specific goal might have also resulted in a missed opportunity for the perennially cash-strapped college. As the last entirely new building constructed at Storer before its closure, the history of Cook Hall physically represents undiluted aspirations for the college’s future at a time when its survival was in a state best described as precarious.

In November 1939, McDonald sent a blueprint to Palmer that “need not be considered final, but furnishes a good starting point for amendments and further suggestions” for the

⁴⁴ President’s Report, 17 May 1934, 1, A&M 1322 (Reel #130, HAFE).

⁴⁵ MBT, 7 Oct. 1939.

new building.⁴⁶ The design, formulated by Amos J. Klinhart, an architect from nearby Hagerstown, Maryland, depicted a handsome, two-and-one-half-story (three-and-one-half story at the rear) Colonial Revival building with a similar front elevation to Brackett Hall, which had been completed three decades earlier.⁴⁷ The small site sketch positioned the proposed building to the east of Anthony Memorial and Brackett halls, defining the eastern edge of a new quadrangle. The primary first-floor rooms appear to have been intended for domestic science study and included a living room, demonstration kitchen, room for “dietetics,” and a nursery. The other floors contain spaces not designated for domestic science, with the basement containing shops for machines, printing, carpentry, automobiles, and radios, the second floor having classrooms for sciences and the arts, and a large lecture hall/auditorium on the third floor. These suggested room functions no less than the title of the drawing—“Proposed Industrial Arts and Domestic Science Building for Storer College”—indicate that McDonald saw the project as an opportunity to remedy the most critical shortcomings in the campus plant.

In the 1930s, as Storer College continued its drive to fulfill its charter and become a four-year, degree granting institution, three types of facility were understood as especially vital to meeting this benchmark: an equipped general sciences building, a domestic science building, and modern library facilities. By that time, an up-to-date library with expanded holdings and science laboratories in particular were essential to the functioning of institutions of higher learning.⁴⁸ The critical need for science laboratories at Storer arose as the school made its initial bids to upgrade its curriculum from predominantly secondary to tertiary. These piecemeal additions were welcome and necessary, but an entire building dedicated to that purpose became a permanent, but never fulfilled desire of the college. In a 1935 letter, Henry McDonald indicated that he was “approaching the State Board of Education with a view to securing a science building for Storer” and hoped to use relief project money to construct the building “by hand” from stone in an on-site quarry.⁴⁹ An undated drawing for a “Science Hall Building for Storer College” by Huntington, West Virginia, architect, Levi J. Dean, which depicts an extensive, three-story facility incorporating Art Deco and Colonial Revival details, might be related to McDonald’s strategy for obtaining funds for such a facility.⁵⁰ This funding scheme never moved forward and in 1937 the major additions desired for the campus remained “a thoroughly equipped Science Hall,” a domestic science building, and an “addition to [the]

⁴⁶ McDonald to Palmer, 24 Nov. 1939.

⁴⁷ See microfilm reproductions in “Blueprints & Drawings,” ca. 1900-1948, A&M 1471 (Reel #136, HAFE).

⁴⁸ For a period review of college plant literature, see Ray L. Hamon, “Plant Development for Higher Education, Including Junior Colleges,” *Review of Educational Research* 8 (Oct. 1938): 423-25.

⁴⁹ McDonald to “My dear Friend,” 15 May 1935, A&M 1322 (Reel #121, HAFE).

⁵⁰ See microfilm reproductions in “Blueprints & Drawings,” ca. 1900-1948, A&M 1471 (Reel #136, HAFE).

library building,” the latter having been reduced from an earlier call for entirely new edifice.⁵¹

Henry McDonald likely saw the healthy fund for a new domestic science building as a logical way to meet a variety of objectives for the school. When talk of finally realizing the domestic science building became serious again in 1939, he personally solicited a design from Klinhart.⁵² Although McDonald wrote in a letter to Harriet Palmer that “The rooms as [Klinhart] named [on the blueprint], particularly on the Basement floor, mean little,” the inclusion of so many functions with no relationship to domestic arts or sciences suggest that he envisioned a grander and more broadly useful addition to the school.⁵³ By hiring Klinhart independently and presenting Palmer with the drawing it is likely that he hoped to persuade an enlargement in program using the only significant funds available to the school for expansion at that time.

McDonald underestimated the confident resolve of Harriet Palmer, the newly elected member of the board of trustees and the person who took charge of the building campaign. While Palmer acknowledged that Klinhart’s front elevation “would be an ornament to any campus,” she breezily dismissed virtually every other aspect of the design:

...the proposed location is not the one approved by the committee.

I do not see how such a building could be put up with the funds available.

...it was not my understanding that we were to provide space for the men’s activities.

I notice that the plan is labeled ‘Industrial Arts and D.S. Building.’ This of course is wrong, as we have no thought of including the former.⁵⁴

Palmer’s concept of the building’s purpose was so directed she even questioned a plan to accommodate “Beauty Culture” training and an art course in the facility.

Palmer recommended an alternative model for the new domestic science building in the same November letter that she dismissed the McDonald/Klinhart proposal. While traveling for Thanksgiving, she visited Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which

⁵¹ *Storer College* [Catalogue], 1936-37, A&M 1322 (Reel #125, HAFE).

⁵² In a letter of 19 October 1939, McDonald to commented to Palmer: “Mr. Desch [the anticipated construction superintendent] suggests the idea of securing the services of a local architect.” As a person with a construction background and the anticipated onsite supervisor for the project, Desch’s suggestion was wholly logical; however, McDonald likely also saw the use of a local architect known to him as a way to maintain a degree of control over the direction of the project.

⁵³ McDonald to Palmer, 24 Nov. 1939.

⁵⁴ Palmer to McDonald, 27 Nov. 1939.

the Free [Will] Baptist Home Mission Society founded in 1880 for the education of Native Americans, in particular members of the Cherokee and Creek (known also as the Muscogee or Muskogee) nations. Regarding the school's then recently constructed domestic science building, Palmer wrote:

The D. S. building at Bacone is a very attractive one, built of stone, and it would be perfectly at home on the Storer campus if it were possible to pick it up and set it down there...I have written to ask if we might use the plans if the committee saw fit to do so...[it] was planned by the...D. S. teacher, and she did a fine piece of work.⁵⁵

In January, Palmer received a favorable reply from Bacone that not only permitted them to use the plans, but to use them at no cost.⁵⁶ With that response, McDonald's preoccupation with making the new building serve a number of needed functions for the college as a whole was jettisoned and the project moved rapidly to the construction stage.

The Construction

Cook Hall was completed within a single building season. At the end of January 1940, Harriet Palmer informed Henry McDonald that she was writing to the man she hoped to secure for superintendence of the construction—H. D. Desch, known in all correspondence as “Mr. Desch”—“to tell him that the plans are accepted.” She added: “I suppose he will come down [to Harpers Ferry] before very long.”⁵⁷ McDonald felt that Mr. Desch's travel was premature because bitter winter weather had delayed the quarrying of stone and “if our winter runs according to the usual formula, we are just entering upon our worst weather.”⁵⁸ Despite this delay, quarrying and excavation moved forward and the cornerstone was laid in May, an event attended by Maude Kenyon who was president of the FBWMS. McDonald had asked her to “speak for a few minutes on the theme; ‘Historical statement as to Mrs. Pamela [*sic*] E. Cook’...My thought is that you shall tell about the Fund and its creator, Mrs. Cook; her interest in Free Baptist work and her work for colored people.”⁵⁹ Construction continued moving briskly forward. In early July “the sheathing [was] being placed on the roof,” and only a little more than a month later, on August 14, McDonald could write to Palmer that “the work on the new hall...is practically at an end. It is likely that, save for the installation of the furnishings and fixtures, the work will be completed Saturday.”⁶⁰ The college community celebrated

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Palmer to McDonald, 22 Jan. 1940.

⁵⁷ Palmer to McDonald, 22 Jan. 1940. It is not known exactly how Desch and Palmer were acquainted, but she advocated for his involvement as the construction supervisor from the moment that plans were seriously underway and rallied behind him when necessary as the building project progressed.

⁵⁸ McDonald to Palmer, 25 Jan. 1940.

⁵⁹ McDonald to Maude Kenyon, 9 May 1940, A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE). In previous letter, Harriet Palmer had conveyed to McDonald that “[Mrs. Kenyon and Mrs. Dennett] are looking forward with keen interest to coming to Storer.” Palmer to McDonald, 25 Apr. 1940.

the dedication of the almost-finished and occupied building on October 5, 1940.⁶¹ By December, the final touches were being executed and McDonald communicated to Palmer his “sincere appreciation” for her unflinching work as chairwoman of the building committee.⁶²

The rapidity of construction and Henry McDonald’s probably genuine sentiment about Harriet Palmer’s efforts overseeing the project masks the constant, albeit low-level and always polite, sparring between the duo for the duration of the project. Things between them seem to have reached such a caustic point in October 1940 that Palmer threatened to not only resign the chairpersonship of the building committee, but also from the larger board of trustees. She wrote to McDonald:

I am sorry I have not succeeded in pleasing you about this building. I had hoped you would think it quite an addition to the campus and the helpfulness provided by the college. But as you have never mentioned it to me or acted as though it was meeting a need I see that I have failed. I have worked very hard to make it efficient, comfortable and attractive, and I had hoped you would find it so, but I have not been fortunate enough to do what you wanted.⁶³

McDonald resolved this somewhat melodramatic flare-up with solicitous words in a subsequent reply, but their friction remained a constant feature of the project. In a single letter at the end of November, Palmer expressed her displeasure with the general slowness in moving the project toward closure (“workmen down your way seem to take their time on things”), and McDonald’s laxity in his accounting—“I am not very happy over the fact that I am not being kept in touch with the financial situation. As long as I am in charge I should know at all times about what is being spent and what has been contracted for.”⁶⁴ McDonald had his moments as well and he continued to butt up against the board even after the building was finished and occupied. Early in 1942, he decided to move the four young women boarding at Cook Hall into the other woman’s dormitory, Brackett Hall, as a cost-saving measure.⁶⁵ Rumors seem to have traveled among the board and members of the FBWMS that McDonald was closing the newly-completed building for all functions. In February 1942, McDonald wrote to Grant Hudson, then chairman of the Storer board of trustees: “somehow I labor under the

⁶⁰ McDonald to Palmer, 6 Jul. 1940, and 14 Aug. 1940.

⁶¹ President’s Report, 31 May 1941, for 5 Oct. 1940 dedication. See also: McDonald to Kenyon, 26 Sep. 1940, A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE).

⁶² McDonald to Palmer, undated (Dec. 1940).

⁶³ Palmer to McDonald, 20 Oct. 1940, for quote, and 22 Oct. 1940.

⁶⁴ Palmer to McDonald, 25 Nov. 1940.

⁶⁵ Horizon Research Consultants, Inc., Gloria Gozdzik, principal investigator, “A Historic Resource Study for Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia,” Jan. 2002, 183. Copy in HAFE. See also series of letters chronicling this situation and the reaction between McDonald and various parties in A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE).

impression that there is a feeling in the minds of some, that I have some continuing unpleasantness towards Cook Hall.”⁶⁶ While ostensibly in reference to the recent situation, McDonald’s statement seems to also confirm that his trouble with the aspects of the project extended beyond specific dealings with Palmer.

Still, from any angle, the Cook Hall project could be considered a success. It took a year to move from planning through construction to occupancy, and the hall was fully completed under budget; the building committee used only \$27,768.16 of the available \$30,000.⁶⁷ This total covered everything from excavation, labor, and railroad shipping fees to furniture, landscaping, and fire extinguishers. At their October 5, 1940 meeting, the board of trustees had resolved to place unused monies into what became the “Cook Hall Maintenance Fund,” the final amount being deposited into this fund being \$2,231.85.⁶⁸ At this meeting the trustees also resolved to provide a receipt to the WABHMS for the \$15,000 they “appropriated out of their Golden Jubilee Fund,” as well as a copy of the minutes, in order to convey “the gratitude of the Board for the gift.”⁶⁹ As for recognizing the contributions of the FBWMS, its president, Maude Kenyon spoke at both the laying of the cornerstone and at the dedication, building committee chairperson Harriet Palmer had been thanked heartily by Henry McDonald and the board, and Permelia Eastman Cook honored with the name of the building.

The 1940-41 academic catalogue featured an entry characterizing the newly constructed building:

Permelia Eastman Cook Hall. During 1940 Cook Hall was erected. It is built from native stone taken from the college quarry and is the fourth building of the kind on campus, erected from such stone. It is a three storied building devoted exclusively to work in Home Economics. It is equipped with the most modern furnishings, both in laboratories and in the living apartments. Gas and electricity for light, power and cooking are available. A well equipped recreation room for physical education classes for women is found on the first floor of this hall. In it is a room now used for exhibition of the art treasures of the college.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ McDonald to Grant Hudson, 11 Feb. 1942, A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE).

⁶⁷ “A Complete Statement of Expenditures for the Erection and Furnishing of Cook Hall,” May 31, 1941, located in MBT, 31 May 1941. The final tally includes the stated total—\$27,168.16—plus an additional \$600.00 to paint the interior of the building.

⁶⁸ MBT, 5 Oct. 1940, for resolution, and Richard I. McKinney, “Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia: Study of Endowment and Other Funds Held by or For the College,” 15 Mar. 1950, 26, A&M 1322 (Reel #121, HAFE), for final total.

⁶⁹ MBT, 5 Oct. 1940.

⁷⁰ *Catalogue of Storer College, 1867-1941: Arts, Pre-Medical, Education, Academic, Musical and Home Economics Courses*, 1940-41, 28, A&M 1322 (Reel #126, HAFE).

Students, faculty, and the leadership at Storer were justifiably proud of this achievement, which despite never-abating financial hardships, embodied the hope and optimism that Storer College would not only continue to exist, but also thrive and expand. It was not the final action made in this direction—an addition to the college library was completed in 1953—but it was the last major, entirely new building realized on the campus.

7. **Alterations and additions:**

Cook Hall was constructed for domestic science instruction and coursework, and as a boarding facility for students in that department. At the time of the National Park Service acquisition in 1962, the first floor had been divided into “2 sets of living quarters, as presently occupied, each with separate front door and small foyer.”⁷¹ While early construction drawings for Cook Hall are presently not known to survive, it can be reasonably argued that the total division of the main floor into two sections was an original element to the plan based on the building’s dual function and clues in the documentary evidence.

Floor plans produced as part of the appraisal of the campus and its buildings around the time the National Park Service acquired the property show the eastern door opening onto a large foyer giving onto a living room to the left and dining room to the right, both facing front. Behind the dining room was a kitchen, which also had access to a small hallway connecting the entry foyer with the kitchen and access to the basement.⁷² Cook Hall’s only staircase ascended to the second floor from the foyer. This arrangement suggests that the lower rooms in the eastern portion of the first floor likely comprised the living and dining areas for the domestic science students boarding in Cook Hall. The other entrance opened onto an L-shaped hallway, principally providing access to two large rooms that served as “teaching laboratories,” one for cooking in the rear extension and one for sewing in the western third of the building.⁷³ The separate entrance, lack of access to the second floor and other spaces on the first floor, generous size of the rooms—both of which also had large storage closets, and a half-bath located in the hallway near the kitchen suggest that these rooms were not related to the boarding function of Cook Hall, but rather constituted an independent classroom suite for the home economics instruction occurring in the building.

⁷¹ Hall, 41.

⁷² See the Cook Hall section in Hall and loose reproductions in the Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

⁷³ McDonald to Hudson, 11 Feb. 1942 A&M 1322 (Reel #117, HAFE), for “two teaching laboratories.” Aside from cooking and sewing being the two key components of domestic science curricula, in a December 1940 letter to Harriet Palmer, Henry McDonald refers to “equipment for sewing laboratory” in a list of expenses for finishing Cook Hall. The large room in the west end of Cook Hall’s first floor is labeled “D. R.” or dining room on a plan in one of the 1962 property valuations, but referred to as “living room” in the text about Cook Hall. While not consistent within the report, these names/functions nevertheless refer to its then current use as living quarters for tenants. The “sewing laboratory” most likely occupied this space with the training kitchen located in the first-floor room in the rear extension. The same 1962 appraisal records that this room contained “3 metal floor cabinet sinks” and was “formerly used as [a] home economics classroom.” Hall, 41.

Immediately after Storer College ceased operations in 1955, the National Park Service became interested in the possibility that, if the closure was a permanent one, the campus might be added to the Harpers Ferry National Monument, which had been established eleven years earlier.⁷⁴ The complexity of these discussions, which again extended all the way to Congress, mirrored that of the original negotiations for transfer of the property from the War Department to Storer nearly a century before. As part of the process, the National Park Service investigated the possibility that the land might merely revert back to the government if it ceased being used for an educational purpose, a position later found untenable at least in part because the campus had grown considerably since 1869.⁷⁵ Other discussions focused on how the Storer College facilities would be utilized by the National Park Service, in particular an anticipated “use as an Eastern Service Training Center.”⁷⁶ This specific outcome was legislated on July 14, 1960 when President Eisenhower signed a bill into law, “which will convert Storer College into a National Park Service Training School.”⁷⁷ The press release announcing this law provided further background of this transaction, noting:

Last September, Senator Jennings Randolph...introduced a bill...which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to purchase the Storer College site for a sum not in excess of \$300,000. At that time Senator Randolph announced that if the legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law the property would become a part of the Harpers Ferry National Monument and the campus and buildings of the College would be converted into a training school for Park personnel all over the United States. The Park Service has only one other training school and it is located at Yosemite.⁷⁸

Despite the legislation, Congress delayed the needed appropriation for one year, including it in the Department of Interior budget for fiscal year 1962.⁷⁹ Once the funds had been made available, the National Park Service commissioned the real estate valuation studies for the property, which were completed in the first months of 1962, leading to a Declaration of Taking and legal ownership in August. Using information in

⁷⁴ Memo from George A. Palmer, Acting Regional Director, Region Five, to Conrad L. Wirth, Director, 25 Aug. 1955, Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

⁷⁵ See period memos and correspondence in Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

⁷⁶ Palmer to Wirth, 19 Jun. 1959, Tract 106-06- folder, HAFE.

⁷⁷ “Randolph Sponsored Bill Is Signed Converting Storer College into National Park Service Training School,” press release, 21 Jul. 1960, A&M 1322 (Reel #124, HAFE).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Senator Robert C. Byrd to Frank Anderson, Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Monument, 4 Oct. 1960, for delay, and Palmer to Tolson, 18 Aug. 1961, for appropriation, both in Tract 106-06 folder, HAFE.

the reports provided by the valuator, the National Park Service quickly razed “several of the older, more deteriorated” buildings on the campus.⁸⁰

Cook Hall was among those retained and plans for its renovation and use as a training center dormitory were created in September and October 1962.⁸¹ The changes included the insertion of a compact fire stair within a new block enclosure at the rear of the western side of the building. This stair ran from the ground-floor through the second and beyond providing an emergency exit, also supplemented the vertical circulation through the building previously relegated solely to the straight run of stairs in the eastern portion of Cook Hall. Except for the new stair, few walls were added or eliminated on the ground floor. Similarly, the second-floor spatial configuration remained largely intact—the rooms were enlarged slightly through the elimination of the original closets and the bathroom was made bigger and, as with all of the other such facilities in the building, updated with modern fixtures.

The first floor layout was most dramatically changed with the creation of three bedrooms and a bathroom along with the fire stair in the western end of the building and the insertion of a large new bathroom between the lounge at the front and the room in the extension at the rear in what had been a corridor, storage room, and powder room. The movement of some walls and installation of a greater number of up-to-date bathrooms on each of the three floors comprise the most significant physical changes to the original building in its transition to a National Park Service dormitory; however, the renovation also included a total cosmetic overhaul with entirely new interior decoration and furniture in the trainee rooms and lounge areas.⁸² A telephone booth was also installed in the lobby at the bottom of the original stair. With the renovations of Cook Hall and Anthony Memorial Hall (Wirth Hall) complete, the “Eastern Training Center” opened in 1964 as the “Stephen T. Mather Training Center,” honoring the first director of the National Park Service.

⁸⁰ U.S. National Park Service, Department of the Interior, “Stephen T. Mather Training Center History,” accessed online, 14 Mar. 2008, <http://www.nps.gov/training/stmahist.htm>.

⁸¹ Two sets of renovation drawings exist in flat files in the basement of Wirth Hall at the Mather Training Center, both produced by the National Park Service, Division of Design & Construction, Eastern Office. One is dated 10 Sep. 1962 and entitled “Alterations: Cook Hall & Anthony Library, Storer College” and marked “Preliminary Drawing.” The second is dated October 1962 and is a slightly revised version of the September drawings. The principal differences appear to be substitution of wardrobes with sliding doors for built-out closets with bifold doors, the addition of wardrobes in the large dormitory rooms on the ground and first floors of the rear extension, and the movement of the telephone booth from a location adjacent to the new fire stair to one across from the existing stair.

⁸² The flat files in the basement of Wirth Hall also preserve a presentation binder entitled “Furnishings Layout for Cook Hall, Eastern Training Center, Harpers Ferry National Monument.” This document is undated and contains no information about the firm or government agency responsible for the work. It is a rare type of survivor, containing not only the furnishing plan, but samples of the fabrics, finishes, and veneers specified for the building’s rehabilitation.

B. Historical Context

Introduction

Storer College's almost nine decades of existence as an institution of higher learning for African Americans had both representative and exceptional characteristics when compared to similar institutions, and when viewed within the contexts of segregation, desegregation, and general developments in education in the United States. Its initial establishment and long-time support by a denominational mission, and the evolution of its curriculum over time provides a typical case study in educational offerings and direction for black Americans from Reconstruction through the mid-twentieth century. In contrast, Storer's association with the founding of the Niagara Movement is the most notable of the more outstanding elements of its history. Given this association, its closure in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision stands as a particularly paradoxical event, an outcome that also situated the school within a small group of historically black colleges that have fully disappeared from the active American educational landscape. The operation of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia—a touchstone location in the narrative of abolition and the Civil War—and a campus history bookended by government ownership further indicates an institution far more intriguing than its present, relative obscurity suggests.

Founding and First Period of Expansion

The initial establishment of Storer College in 1867 resulted from the energies of a number of groups and individuals: most centrally, the Free Will Baptists, of particular note Rev. Oren B. Cheney, president of Bates College in Maine; the Freedmen's Bureau; Congregationalist philanthropist and principal benefactor, John Storer; and the West Virginia state and federal governments.⁸³ The Free Will Baptists had launched the "Shenandoah Mission" at Harpers Ferry in 1865 in Lockwood House, built in the 1840s as the residence for the paymaster of the United States Armory in Harpers Ferry. Baptist denominational support for the school would continue for its entire history, and Cheney's dedication to its humanitarian goals eventually resulted in a \$10,000 monetary pledge from John Storer; the funds would become available only if the Free Will Baptists matched them for the purpose of creating a school intended from the start to evolve into a full college. In March 1868, the West Virginia legislature fully ratified the charter proposed the previous autumn for a school "without distinction of race or color."⁸⁴ In December 1869, ownership of seven-and-one-half acres of land and four armory residences already in use by the institution legally transferred from the War Department to the president and trustees of Storer College.

The early history of Storer College was similar to most other historically black colleges and universities founded early in Reconstruction; they had to cope with one of the many grim

⁸³ For detailed discussions of the events and conditions surrounding the founding of Storer College, see: Horizon Research Consultants, Inc., Gloria Gozdzik, principal investigator, "A Historic Resource Study for Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia," Jan. 2002, Morgantown, WV, and Dawne Raines Burke, "Storer College: A Hope for Redemption in the Shadow of Slavery, 1865-1955, diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, 2004, privately published as: *An American Phoenix: A History of Storer College from Slavery to Desegregation, 1865-1955*, ed. Michael Slaven.

⁸⁴ "Act of Corporation," as transcribed in Burke, "Storer College," 171. See also period transcription in "Storer College Book No. Records," 1868-97, 9 (Reel #131, HAFE).

outcomes of slavery—a staggering level of illiteracy. By necessity, the first teachers concentrated their energy on providing basic literacy, “although this entailed the illogic of labeling as ‘universities’ and ‘colleges’ schools which, at the outset, were actually elementary in character,” as observed in one mid-twentieth assessment of desegregation in higher education.⁸⁵ Fifteen years later, Storer’s curriculum remained focused on secondary education, with one “normal” track for teacher training and an “academic” track with coursework typical of period high schools.⁸⁶ The 1882-84 catalogue outlined the school’s then present state and future aspirations: “In accordance with the wishes of Mr. Storer, the Institution was chartered as a College, though with the purpose of conducting it as a Normal School and Seminary until its endowment will justify the establishment of a College Course.”⁸⁷

Physical additions to the Storer campus during this early period reflected the school’s newness, most particularly the need for dormitories and classrooms. Adaptation of the four armory dwellings—known in Storer history as Lockwood, Brackett, Morrell, and Anthony houses—had immediate limitations as they needed to function as classrooms, boarding halls for students, and living and administrative space for teachers and school officials and their families. With funds from the Freedmen’s Bureau, the college built Lincoln Hall, a barracks-like, three-and-one-half story, frame dormitory for boys, in 1868-70. This was followed six years later by the construction of a dormitory for girls, Myrtle (later Mosher) Hall. Completed in 1876, the three-story brick building featured a modish Mansard roof. These dormitories symmetrically flanked what would become the campus’s centerpiece, Anthony Memorial Hall.

As originally purchased by Storer College, “Anthony House” and the three other antebellum houses were simple, almost severe, two-story brick dwellings. The building’s reconception and substantial enlargement in 1881-82 repositioned the house as the south wing of an entirely new building designed by Peter J. Lauritzen, who Storer president Nathan Brackett described as “a first class Architect from Washington D.C.”⁸⁸ Lauritzen, a Danish immigrant born in 1847 and

⁸⁵ Preston Valien, “Desegregation in Higher Education: A Critical Summary,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 27 (Summer 1958): 374. See also the seminal: Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Evolution of the Negro College* (1934) (College Park, MD: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969).

⁸⁶ *Biennial Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Storer College, Academic and State Normal Departments, Located at Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia, 1882-84* (Dover, NH: Morning Star Job Printing House, 1884), 23, A&M 1322 (Reel #128, HAFE).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁸ Nathan C. Brackett to “Brother” [Alexander H.] Morrell, 29 Apr. 1881, HFT-00052, 1881, Storer College Collection, HAFE, for quote. Dawne Raines Burke suggested “R. A. Gillis” as the architect for Anthony Memorial Hall in her dissertation (in turn based on a 1991 report). Rather than being the initial architect, Gillis is the individual hired in 1927 to report on the extent of the damage and estimated cost of rebuilding Anthony Hall after a disastrous fire gutted the building’s interior. See letters and report in HFT-00058, 1926-1935, Storer College Collection, HAFE. Microfilmed elevations, plans, and sections, which are undated, clearly show Anthony Hall with Victorian decorative features and are signed “P. Lauritzen Architect.” The character of the building in the drawings, the correspondence between Brackett and Morrell, and the named architect’s active dates of architectural practice in Washington provide the evidence for attributing the building to Lauritzen. See: “Blueprints & Drawings,” ca. 1900-1948, A&M 1471 (Reel #136, HAFE), for drawings, and “Storer College Book No. 1 Records,” 1868-97, entry for 26 Mar [1881] (Reel #131, HAFE), for board of trustees mention of project.

educated at the Polytechnic School of Copenhagen, made his appearance in the Washington city directory in 1870.⁸⁹ Between 1870 and 1883, the year in which he relocated to New York, Lauritzen furthered his education and gained practical experience by working progressively through a number of allied career fields in a manner typical of many nineteenth-century architectural practitioners—a draftsman for the Treasury in 1870; an engraver in 1871; and an engineer in 1872.⁹⁰ He first listed himself as an “architect” in 1874, and one year later went so far as to take out a full-page advertisement for his new practice, with noted references from powerful political and diplomatic players, including: Morrison Remick Waite, Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, U. S. Attorney General George Williams, Hegerman Lindencrone, the Danish minister, and John Hitz, the Consul General of Switzerland.⁹¹ The backing of these individuals still may not have produced an adequate income for in 1878 and 1879 he was also associated with the Danish consulate, and in 1880 and 1881 held the position of “assistant inspector of buildings,” presumably for the District of Columbia. Whether he moved to New York in 1883 because he was not excelling as an architect in Washington or because he felt his overall prospects were better in the larger city is open to conjecture. Regardless of the impetus, in New York he did enjoy a measure of professional success before departing for the Yukon gold fields in 1897, designing the Manhattan Athletic Club (1889-90); the Union League Club (1889-90) and the Offerman Building (1890-93), both in Brooklyn; and eight fire houses in the same borough between 1894 and 1897.⁹²

It is not known how Nathan Brackett and Lauritzen became acquainted; however, the probable architect’s fee of \$1000 for the project would have been particularly welcome at a time when his design practice may not have been as profitable as he would have liked.⁹³ Lauritzen’s somewhat quirky concept for Anthony Memorial Hall combined elements drawn from a number of design modes, the most prominent being Greek and Romanesque; use of the former perhaps being a nod to the antebellum stylistic origins of Anthony House and its reuse in the new building. In contrast, the round-headed arches of the upper-story windows of the new center block foreshadow the direction he would take in such later commissions as the Union League Club and the Offerman Building. While his interiors disappeared in the 1927 fire, Anthony Memorial Hall’s masonry shell survived and remains a testament to not only his early years as an architect, but also Storer College’s first period of development and growth. The cornerstone for this edifice had been laid in May 1881 as part of a program marking the school’s fourteenth anniversary, which included addresses made by Frederick Douglass—who was a trustee of the

⁸⁹ Matthew A. Postal, “Offerman Building,” New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, 15 Mar. 2005, 3-4, for Lauritzen biographical information, report accessed online, 6 Mar. 2008, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/offerman.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Washington information drawn from the *Boyd’s Directory of the District of Columbia* (Washington, Wm. H. Boyd) for the years 1870 through 1883.

⁹¹ *Boyd’s Directory of the District of Columbia*, 1875, advertisement located between pages 320 and 321.

⁹² Postal, 3-4.

⁹³ Brackett notes in his letter to Morrell about the design for Anthony Hall that the design is “worth a thousand dollars.” Brackett to Morrell, 29 Apr. 1881.

college—and Andrew Hunter, the prosecuting attorney for John Brown’s trial.⁹⁴ The building was dedicated in May 1882.⁹⁵ It would be a decade before the school constructed another new building on its campus, expansion that was a localized response to the vociferous national debate about the structure and purpose of education for black Americans.

Industrial Education

In 1887, Mary P. DeWolf (later spelled DeWolfe) gifted \$2,000 to Storer College “to be applied toward establishing the DeWolf Industrial Department,” “as a memorial to her husband.”⁹⁶ Mary DeWolf referred to Nathan Brackett as “brother” in her letters and her connection with the school appears to have been denominational. Storer College completed the DeWolfe Industrial Building in 1891 and the school catalogue published in the same year noted that the industrial department included instruction for young women in cutting and sewing as well as carpentry, ostensibly for young men.⁹⁷ Seven years later, Storer’s 1897 catalogue noted that a domestic science department had been added to the sewing department and that “instruction in carpentry and painting is given to a large number of students.”⁹⁸ Growing interest in these departments led the leadership of Storer to implore: “new shops for other trades are an imperative necessity. We are waiting only for the funds with which to enlarge this department. *Friends of Storer college, come to the rescue.*”⁹⁹ The call was answered with the completion of the Lewis W. Anthony Industrial Building in 1903—endowed by children of the namesake of Anthony Memorial Hall to further memorialize their father’s dedication to Storer. This building provided Storer enough room for the separation of the women’s and men’s industrial departments. The 1908 catalogue explained that the De Wolfe Industrial Building contained, “the demonstration kitchen, the general kitchen, pantries and the college laboratory,” and the Anthony Industrial Building housed “the blacksmith shop, store-room, office and carpenter shop...In this building is done work in carpentry, cabinet making, turning, glazing, painting, soldering and iron working.”¹⁰⁰ While the

⁹⁴ Horizon Research Consultants, 53-55; Dawne Raines Burke, “Storer College,” 191-92. In 1909, Storer College purchased the building that was known as “John Brown’s Fort.” Constructed in 1848 at Harpers Ferry’s U. S. Armory as an engine and guard house, it was the place in which John Brown locked himself at the end of his raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. Storer College used it as a museum until the sale of the campus plant to the National Park Service, who subsequently relocated it to the lower town.

⁹⁵ *Catalogue of Storer College, 1867-1938: A Junior College for Colored Youth with Pre-Medical, State Normal, Academic, Musical and Industrial Departments*, 1937-38, 10.

⁹⁶ Mary P. DeWolf to Brackett, 28 May and 10 Jun. 1887, HFT-00052, 1882-89, Storer College Collection, HAFE.

⁹⁷ *Biennial Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Storer College, Academic, State Normal, and Industrial Departments, Located at Harper’s Ferry, W. Va., 1889-1891* (Harper’s Ferry, 1891), 19, A&M 1322 (Reel #128, HAFE). See also Burke, “Storer College,” 258-63.

⁹⁸ *Annual Catalogue of Storer College, Academic, State Normal, and Industrial Departments, 1897-98* (Harper’s Ferry, 1898), 23, 26, A&M 1322 (Reel #128, HAFE).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁰ *Catalogue of Storer College, Academic, State Normal, Biblical, Musical, and Industrial Departments, 1907-08* (Harper’s Ferry, 1908), 14-15.

leadership at Storer remained committed to its original curricular emphases of liberal arts academics and teacher education, even expanding them with the addition of “Biblical” and “Musical” departments around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, most of the capital investment in the campus was directed to industrial education.

Storer College’s focus on facilities for industrial education at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth was part of a widespread period debate initiated by a reconsideration of the purpose and most useful outcome of education for African Americans. The school’s 1898 catalogue explained: “No person is liberally educated unless he can skillfully use his hands as well as [his] brain. Industrialism is the watchword of the age.”¹⁰¹ While there is little debate about the importance of “industry”—in all senses of the word—to this epoch of American history; however, the degree to which “industrial education” was to be directed toward and pursued by black Americans was hotly debated, most popularly by Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) and W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963). Washington had long promoted practical education as the best approach for assuring the economic well-being, independence, and eventually, social acceptance of newly freed blacks in the south. Du Bois felt this approach would permanently disadvantage black Americans and that a solid, liberal arts education was the most important avenue for achieving true freedom, and civic and economic standing, even for blacks choosing to pursue a manual labor career path.¹⁰² Even while it expanded its industrial education offerings, Storer College never abandoned its commitment to liberal arts education and certainly was not, as an institution, ambivalent about attaining full civil rights for black Americans. In 1906, the school hosted the second meeting of the Niagara Movement—the first on American soil—an organization working to promote racial equality and progress whose membership was integral to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. Storer College’s general investment in industrial education was relatively short-lived and, after World War I, its leaders became intent on meeting the full potential of its original charter as a “college.”

A College in Name and Practice

I am pleased to report that the State Board of [f] Education approved the report of our committee which visited your institution, by giving Storer College junior college rating. To maintain this rating permanently, your institution will be expected to carry out certain suggestions made to you by the committee, and to keep all divisions of work and departments up to or above the present status.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *Annual Catalogue of Storer College, 1897-98*, 26.

¹⁰² For a brief summary of their views, see Julian B. Roebuck and Komanduri S. Murty, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 30-31. For more on historically black colleges and universities, see also Juan Williams and Dwayne Ashley with Shawn Rhea, *I’ll Find a Way or Make One* (New York: Amistad, 2004), Erskine S. Walther, *Some Readings on Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (Greensboro, NC: Management Information and Research, 1994), and Albert N. Whiting, *Guardians of the Flame* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 1991).

¹⁰³ J. F. Marsh to McDonald, 7 Apr. 1924, HFT-00057, Dec. 1911-Dec. 1925, Storer College Collection, HAFE.

These words, penned in 1924 by J. F. Marsh, the secretary of the West Virginia State Board of Education, to Storer president Henry McDonald was a benchmark for the school as it transitioned closer to the goal of its charter. A new urgency in the expansion of campus's physical plant originated in concern for meeting the state's curriculum guidelines for junior colleges and, slightly later, colleges, and the need to remain competitive in attracting students. The appearance and spread of junior colleges is a defining feature of the American education system during the first half of the twentieth century. Explanations for the popularity and rapid spread of this type of tertiary institution varied considerably throughout the country, and included concerns about the costs associated with and distant locations of four-year universities within states and regions; the desirability for disparate, state-run education systems to adhere to greater national standardization; and the American economy's need for workers with technical or practical skills beyond those gained from high-school curricula.¹⁰⁴

Small denominational schools outside metropolitan areas like Storer, regardless of the race of their student bodies, provided a major institutional foundation for junior colleges as their curriculum and purpose were often historically situated on secondary education. Over time, this focus fostered precarious financial conditions as more and more students took advantage of the ever-expanding number of public high schools.¹⁰⁵ Although this specific economic outcome threatened black institutions somewhat later in segregated, Jim Crow America, it perhaps held greater irony when it did occur. Henry McDonald commented to the Storer board of trustees in 1938: "I have to report that Jefferson County will build a county high school for colored youth in Charles Town [about seven miles away] this summer. This will adversely affect our high school enrollment. Yet such a high school is needed and will mark educational progress here."¹⁰⁶ McDonald's worry resulted in a single recommendation to the board of trustees, one that had been haunting the school since at least the 1920s, if not earlier: "...Our vital need is to become a fully equipped college."¹⁰⁷ The underlying problem, as always in the school's history, was money. In order to advance the curriculum so that the institution could begin granting college degrees, Storer College would first have to both attract and secure an even more educated faculty and provide a campus plant to underpin modern needs in teaching and learning.¹⁰⁸

The leadership at Storer was well-aware of the hurdles in becoming an actual four-year college. In 1930, the board of trustees had voted to maintain their present status as a private, denominational junior college with an intent on soon becoming a four-year collegiate institution

¹⁰⁴ See David A. Lane, "The Junior College Movement Among Negroes," *The Journal of Negro Education* 2 (Jul. 1933): 272-83, and B. Lamar Johnson, "Junior-College Trends," *The School Review* 52 (Dec. 1944): 606-610; see also primary source documents available online at "Junior College History," <http://junior-college-history.org/>. For more recent studies, see John H. Frye, *The Vision of the Public Junior College, 1900-1940* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), and Thomas Diener, *Growth of an American Invention* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁵ Summary for Elizabeth Brooks, "The Junior College," master's thesis, Clark University, 1917, accessed online, 13 Mar. 2008, <http://junior-college-history.org/Sources/brooksthesis.html>.

¹⁰⁶ President's Report, (ca. October 1, 1938), A&M 1322 (Reel #130, HAFE).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Horizon Research Consultants, 138-42, 175-83; Burke, "Storer College," Chapter 8.

rather than reverting to a high school or more closely affiliating with the state. In reaching this decision, it concluded: “there is a well defined place in education for the Junior College...[and] there is a definite and essential reason for the continuance of such schools as Storer with a strong religious atmosphere.”¹⁰⁹ Maintaining Storer’s existing course was a bold decision given its rocky financial history to say nothing of the acute economic decline enveloping the country. Five years later the goals of the school remained predictably large, yet attitudes about its future were optimistic:

[The] growth [of an institution of higher learning] is measured by its needs. Storer is no exception to this rule. She needs some really outstanding additions to her already excellent curriculum and equipment. First: A Domestic Arts Building to house the many branches of applied Art. Second: A Science Building in which scientific research may be adequately carried on. Third: A new fire-proof library building in which to house the present excellent working library. Fourth: an endowment for the increase of teacher’s salaries.¹¹⁰

Four years later in 1939, Henry McDonald again summed up the state of Storer College with a mix of pragmatism and hope, observing:

These times are depressing in many ways. Men and women feel the economic pressure, as never before. It may seem to human foresight not to be an opportune time to make a large plan for any institution. But the clock of destiny knows no difference in our values. We should look forward toward a better tomorrow, and have faith in larger things for Storer College.¹¹¹

In only months, Storer’s leadership put their “faith” into action and launched the construction campaign for Cook Hall; unfortunately, it was the only one of the school’s identified “needs” that would be realized before closure in 1955. Up-to-date science laboratories were variously installed in existing buildings, but none dedicated solely to science—likely the most expensive single item on the wish list—was ever constructed. A new library went unbuilt as well, although a modern extension was added to the rear of the Lewis W. Anthony building in 1953, which had been renovated into a library in the wake of the destruction of Anthony Memorial Hall in the 1927 fire.¹¹²

Although not always stressed as much as the other facilities, Storer records also show that the lack of a modern gymnasium was viewed as a major deficiency for the school—not so much for accreditation as for appealing to prospective students, which in turn would increase revenue.

¹⁰⁹ *Storer Record* 32 (Jul. 1930): 1, A&M 1322 (Reel #124, HAFE).

¹¹⁰ Pinkham, 10-11.

¹¹¹ President’s Report, June 3, 1939, A&M 1322 (Reel #130, HAFE).

¹¹² *The Storer College Builder* (Feb. 1954): 1, A&M (Reel #122, HAFE); for a full set of construction drawings, see “Blueprints & Drawings,” ca. 1900-1948, A&M 1471 (Reel #136, HAFE).

Fundraising drives and designs for a new gym spanned three decades beginning in the 1920s.¹¹³ The 1937-38 Storer catalogue implored: “the building formerly known as the Robinson barn was fitted up as a basket ball [sic] court in 1921...[and while] It has added greatly to the physical culture and athletic opportunities here[,] We very much need a new gymnasium.”¹¹⁴ At least three distinct designs exist for a new gymnasium, dating from the 1920s through 1948, but none of these projects never came to fruition.¹¹⁵ Even as the specter of closure loomed, a 1954 survey about the college’s priorities still targeted a gymnasium as integral to its future. Among other comments on the matter, one responder observed: “Storer needs a gymnasium badly because there are students who want to come to Storer, but because of the lack of a gymnasium...won’t come.”¹¹⁶

Despite a chronic shortage of funds and setbacks like a second, smaller but still serious, fire in Anthony Memorial Hall in November 1939, Storer eventually did meet the goal of its collegiate charter.¹¹⁷ In 1938, the state designated it as a degree-granting institution; in 1942, it conferred its first degrees; and in 1946, the state accredited the institution for degrees in elementary and secondary education.¹¹⁸ These developments and the library addition communicate an understandable confidence in the school’s future; however, a perennial shortage of cash and mounting debt outweighed optimism in the end. With the disappearance of its \$20,000 annual state subsidy after the Brown decision, Storer’s leadership could no longer hide these harsh realities, and was compelled to close the school after the 1955 academic year.¹¹⁹ Five years later, Storer College was officially disassembled. It legally merged with Virginia Union University, which became spiritually responsible for “perpetuat[ing] the aims, ideals and purpose for which Storer College was founded,” and its assets turned over to Alderson-Broadus College in Philippi, West Virginia—both institutions were associated with the American (formerly Northern) Baptist Convention.¹²⁰ West Virginia University in Morgantown became the repository of its paper records and the National Park Service purchased the physical campus with the intent of using it as a training center, a function that remains to this day.

¹¹³ See entries in the Trustees Annual Minutes, 1913-1944, A&M 1322 (Reel #130, HAFE), from 1921 forward, and discussions in various Storer College publications A&M 1322 (Reels #121 and #122, HAFE).

¹¹⁴ *Catalogue of Storer College, 1867-1938* (1937-38), 22.

¹¹⁵ See “Blueprints & Drawings,” ca. 1900-1948, A&M 1471 (Reel #136, HAFE).

¹¹⁶ Storer College Board of Trustees, “Storer College Survey,” 1954, D11, A&M 1322 (Reel #124, HAFE).

¹¹⁷ Press release, 2 Nov. 1939, HFT-00059, Oct. 1939-1943, Storer College Collection, HAFE, for fire.

¹¹⁸ Vivian Verdell Gordon, “A History of Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 30 (Autumn 1961): 448.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 448-49.

¹²⁰ Dawne Raines Burke, “Storer College,” 321.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character:** Cook Hall's primary visual qualities are derived from the local gray-green stone used for its walls and the Colonial Revival architectural elements that enliven its front façade—both the material and stylistic aspects of the design had precedent in other Storer College buildings. The tradition-bound symmetry and staidness of the façade is reduced at the rear because of an original, two-story extension on the basement and first-floor levels and greater variety in the size and placement of door and window openings. Contrast between the front and back is also provided by the site, which slopes away steeply, revealing the basement at the rear and even allowing for an at-grade entrance to the sub-basement under the extension.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The building has a T-shaped footprint and its maximum dimensions are roughly 85' x 56'.
2. **Foundations:** The foundation walls are constructed of the same irregular, random-coursed blocks of local stone used for the entire building shell. The foundation walls are approximately 2'-0" thick.
3. **Walls:** The load-bearing walls are composed of irregular blocks of stone laid up in random courses from the top of the attic gables down to the sub-basement. The upper portions of the wall measure approximately 1'-6".

The façade (north elevation) is symmetrically arranged. It is divided into three parts by a central pavilion that steps out slightly from the wall plane and is crowned by a front-facing cross gable. Groups of three windows are centered on the ground, first, and second stories of the pavilion. The outer portions of the façade mirror each other and are organized into three vertical bays with doors on the first floor in the bay nearest the pavilion. Conceived in a Colonial Revival mode, Cook Hall's façade is embellished by windows arranged in a modified Palladian composition on the second floor of the pavilion, and by two six-panel doors, which flank the pavilion and are contained within fully developed architraves featuring fluted Doric pilasters and denticulated cornices

The east and west elevations are similar in organization. Each is two stories over a basement and with an attic. The window openings are organized into two vertical bays on the ground, first, and second floors. Square attic vents are centered in the gable on each of the walls. The east and west walls of the rear

extension are also organized into two vertical bays with windows opening onto the ground and first floors.

The rear of the building (south elevation) is the least ordered of the four. Although not entirely haphazard, the organization of vertical bays is less regular than on the other walls. This irregularity is further reinforced by differences in the size of the window openings, and the doors and high-set windows of the basement and sub-basement, which are fully revealed on this side of the building because of the sloping site. Three brick chimneys pierce the roof on this side the roof's ridgeline, two near the middle and one on the east end of the building.

4. **Structural systems, framing:** The exterior walls are load-bearing masonry. Some of the interior partition walls in the basement are brick in the vicinity of the chimney stack at the center of the building. These walls may help support the floor joist system for the first floor.
5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** There are four entrances for the building proper. The main doors are located on the first floor of the north elevation, flanking the extruded pavilion. Both entrances are framed by fully developed architraves that feature fluted Doric pilasters and denticulated cornices, holding six-panel doors. There are two basement door openings on the south elevation, one in the eastern section of the building and one in the western end, which is pierced by a small square window. The doors have no articulated framing or surrounds; both are topped by concrete lintels, the lintel for the eastern door is part of a larger unit that includes two adjacent windows. The north wall of the rear extension includes a similarly articulated door that is the only access point for the sub-basement.
 - b. **Windows:** Without exception, the first- and second-floor window openings of Cook Hall hold double-hung sash, a majority of which are similarly dimensioned six-over-six, divided-light units. Six of the rear windows have smaller overall dimensions, and two of them have different muntin arrangements, one is four-over-four and one is eight-over-eight. Most of the openings are also fitted with aluminum tracks for screens and storm windows. The attic openings, once containing small windows, are presently fitted with louvers. The rectangular basement windows are nearly square and are set at the same height around the entire building, putting their position at ground level on the front whereas they appear high in the wall at the rear. Most of the openings hold aluminum, awning-type windows, except where they have been replaced with window air-conditioning units or louvers. Each of the window openings is framed by a concrete lintel and sill, including the arch over the semicircular window over the center second-floor window on the façade. The words

“PERMELIA,” “EASTMAN,” and “COOK HALL” are incised on the lintels over the trio of first-floor windows at the center of the façade.

- 6. Roof:** The main portion of roof is a side-gable type composed of common rafters and sheathed in asphalt shingles. A cross gable with a slightly shallower pitch than the main section intersects it at the mid-point of the front façade. The rear extension is covered by a very low pitched, hip roof covered in standing seam metal sheathing.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Plan:** The basement and first floor have T-shaped footprints resulting from a two-story extension at the center of the rear wall. The two, large square rooms in this extension are underpinned by a sub-basement room accessible from the exterior, which contains the heating equipment. Circulation on these two floors is focused on clusters of rooms near the two staircases that flank central lounge areas located against the north wall. The circulation on the second floor is linear, with a double-loaded corridor running east-west across the building.
- 2. Flooring:** A majority of the interior rooms are carpet over wood on the first and second floors and carpet over concrete in the basement. There is some vinyl flooring on the first floor at the two front entrances and in the basement. All of the bathroom floors are tiled. The original, wood stair up to the second floor in the east end of the building is carpeted; the flight down to the basement was updated with terrazzo treads. The stair treads and landings of the later stair in west end of the building are all of terrazzo.
- 3. Wall and ceiling finish:** The walls and ceiling are simply finished with wall board or smooth plaster.
- 4. Doorways and doors:** The interior doors are predominantly flush finished and painted white. The two interior vestibule doors at the front are glazed.
- 5. Trim and woodwork:** The architraves are wood painted white with a plain backband embellished at its edge with simple, quarter-round molding. The wood stair appears to have its original balustrade and newel post, all of a “craftsman” type typical of houses in the 1910s and 1920s.
- 6. Mechanical:** It appears that very little of the original mechanical systems survive. The plumbing and bathroom fixtures, heating system (radiators), and the electric lines and lighting fixtures date from the 1960s renovation. There have been updates since that time that include surface-mounted conduits for electric, computer lines, and safety features, as well as surface-mounted switch and outlet boxes, lighting fixtures and such things as exit signs.

A telephone booth installed as part of the National Park Service renovations in 1962-63 remains in situ at the bottom of the original stairs, still with a functioning ventilating fan and light triggered on when the door is closed.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The targeted discussion of Cook Hall and its relevant historical contexts in this report builds on an overall narrative crafted for Storer College in two earlier studies. In January 2002, Horizon Research Consultants, Inc., with Gloria Gozdzik as the principal investigator, produced “A Historic Resource Study for Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia,” for the National Park Service. This work was followed in 2004 by an dissertation authored by Dawne Raines Burke and entitled “Storer College: A Hope for Redemption in the Shadow of Slavery, 1865-1955.” This dissertation was subsequently edited by Michael Slaven and privately published as: *An American Phoenix: A History of Storer College from Slavery to Desegregation, 1865-1955*.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library and Archive

For this project, the principal resource groups for conducting primary research on Cook Hall and Storer College were located at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Library and Archive (HAFE). One group, entitled the “Storer College Collection,” is a comparatively modest manuscript collection arranged chronologically in folders. The other is a set of twenty-four microfilm reels that depict a vast and diverse array of documents related to Storer College from its founding through its closure and dismantlement in the 1950s and 1960s.

The twenty-four reels of microfilm appear to reproduce most—and quite possibly all—of the records transferred to West Virginia University (WVU) in the wake of Storer’s closure, papers which are now collectively known as the “Storer College Archives” and held at the West Virginia History and Regional Collection, WVU, Morgantown, West Virginia. The frequently random organization of the materials documented on the microfilm suggest that they were imaged early-on in the accession process in 1972, before any attempt had been made for coherent cataloguing. The reels are marked with the internal HAFE numbering system as well as the WVU “Storer College Archives” numbers. WVU’s A&M 1322 comprised the bulk of the grouping at HAFE with nineteen reels bearing predominantly correspondence, business papers, and college publications, with some financial, student affairs, and board of trustees records. The single reel marked A&M 1471 was extremely valuable in that it included a number of architectural drawings from different periods for both built and unbuilt Storer projects. Four reels, labeled A&M 1168, contained student records and were of little use to this project. These catalogue numbers are three of five in use at WVU for the Storer College Archive collection (the others are A&M 2621 and 1131).

The staggering quantity and diversity of the records on the microfilm at HAFE made unnecessary a trip to WVU to see the originals or the materials in A&M 2621 and 1131. In particular, the design and construction of Cook Hall in 1939-40 was fully documented in the correspondence between Harriet W. Palmer, the Storer trustee who chaired the building

committee, and Storer president Henry T. McDonald, located on the reel numbered #117 in the HAFE system. The sources individually listed below were, for the most part, viewed on the microfilm at HAFE; the specific reel numbers for each source are found in the citations within this report.

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Storer Record 32 (Jul. 1930).

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Natural Resources and Lands Program, Documents related to Tract 106-06

Numerous memos and copies of other correspondence from the 1950s and 1960s are present in the folder for Tract 106-06 and provide much information about the acquisition of the Storer College campus by the National Park Service.

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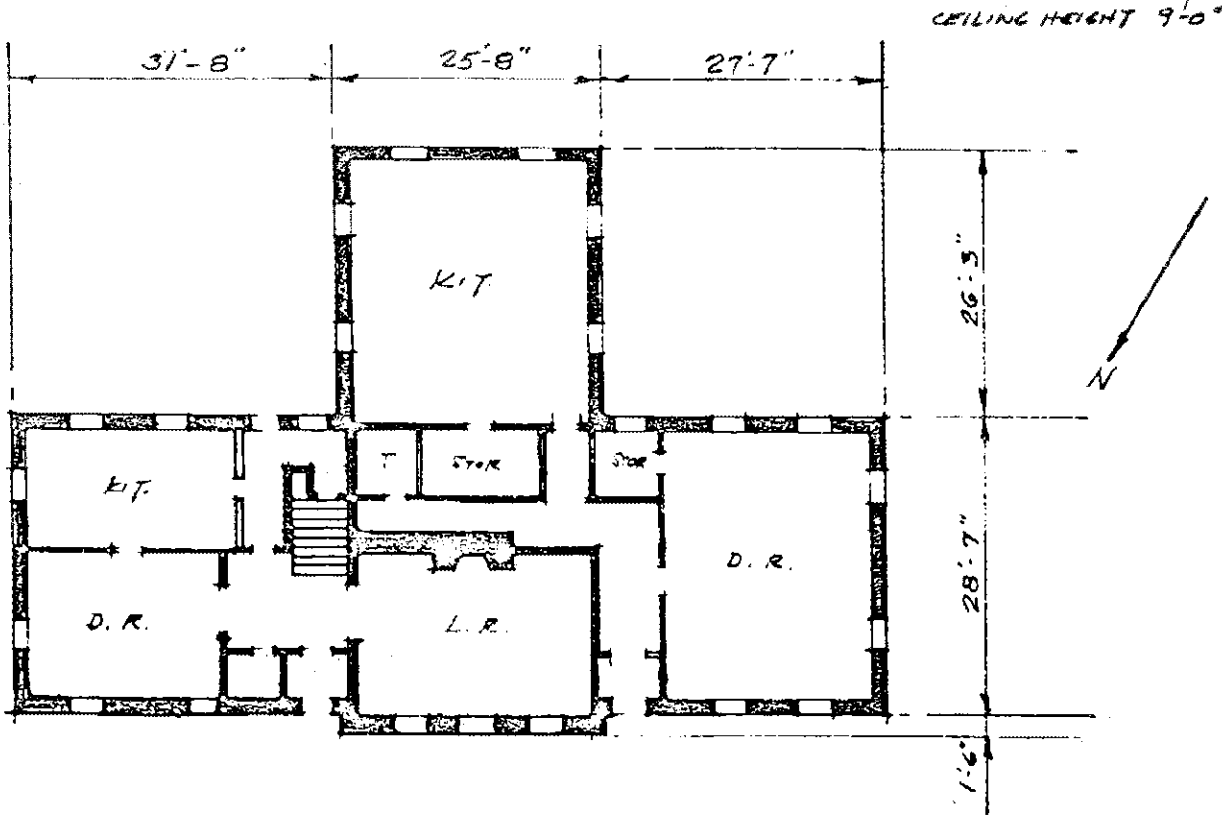
PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

The Cook Hall project was cosponsored by Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The documentation was undertaken by HABS, Richard O'Connor, Chief of Heritage Documentation Programs, under the direction of Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief of HABS. The project leader was HABS architect Mark Schara. HABS architects Paul Davidson, Anne E. Kidd, and Jason McNatt conducted fieldwork and produced the measured drawings; the large-format photography was produced by HABS photographer James Rosenthal; and HABS historian James A. Jacobs researched and wrote the history; and during the fall/winter 2007/08.

APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

- fig. 1.** First-floor plan, Cook Hall, 1962, showing the probable configuration at the time of completion in 1940. HAFE.
- fig. 2.** Second-floor plan, Cook Hall, 1962, showing probable configuration at the time of completion in 1940. HAFE.
- fig. 3.** Basement plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFE.
- fig. 4.** First-floor plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFE.
- fig. 5.** Second-floor plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFE.



FIRST FLOOR
FULL BASEMENT UNDER

COOK HALL (SPAN) 1/16" = 1'-0"

fig. 1. First-floor plan, Cook Hall, 1962, showing the probable configuration at the time of completion in 1940. HAFE.

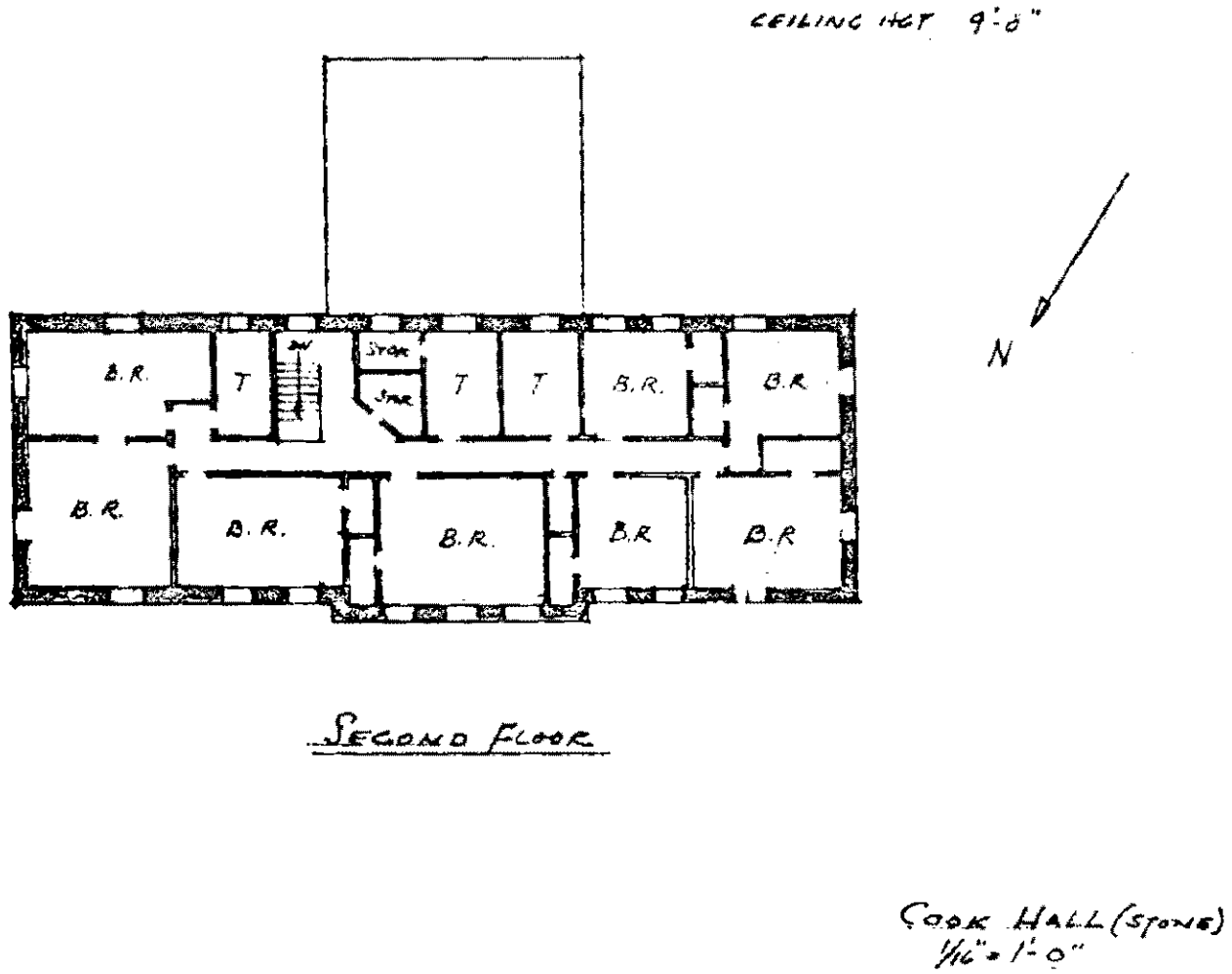


fig. 2. Second-floor plan, Cook Hall, 1962, showing probable configuration at the time of completion in 1940. HAFE.

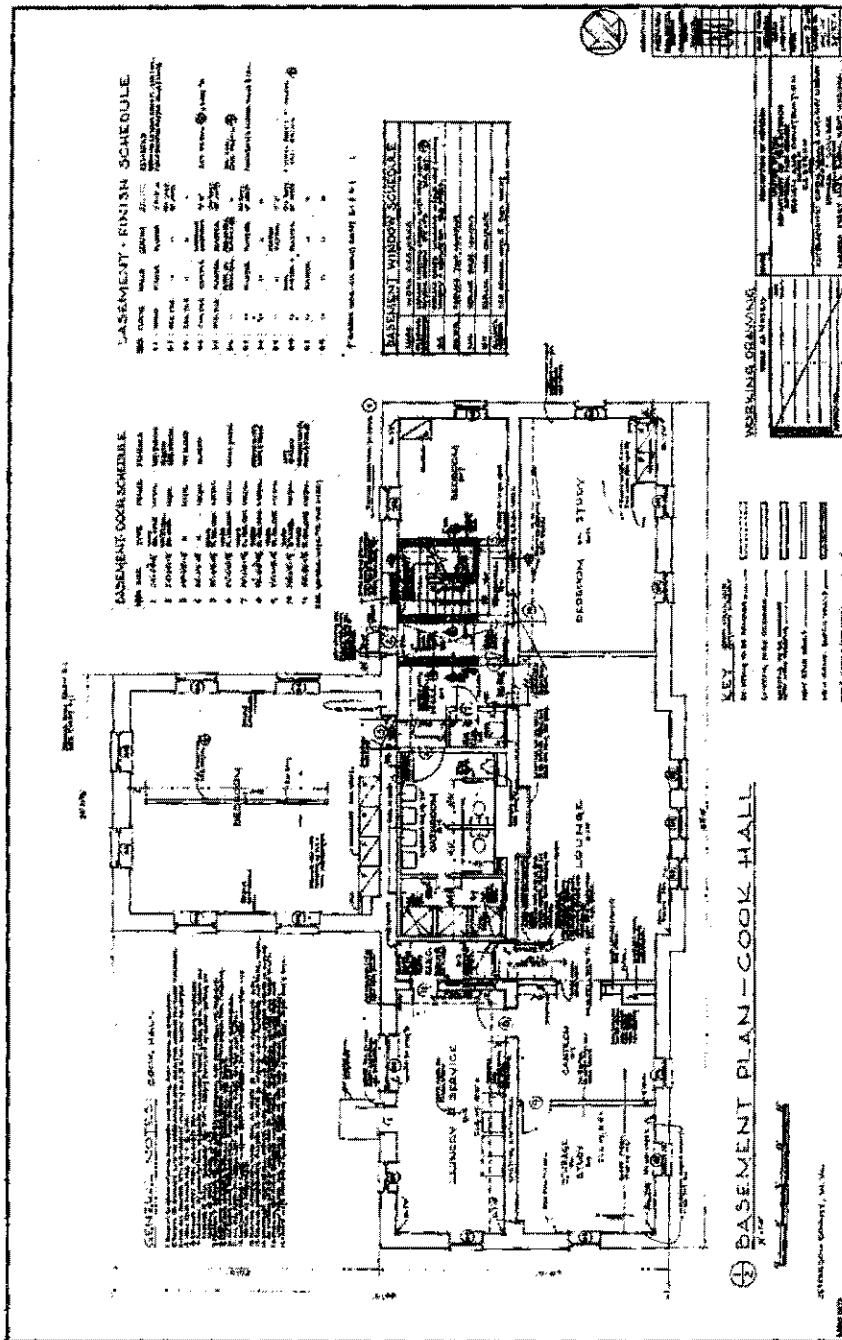


fig. 3. Basement plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFE.

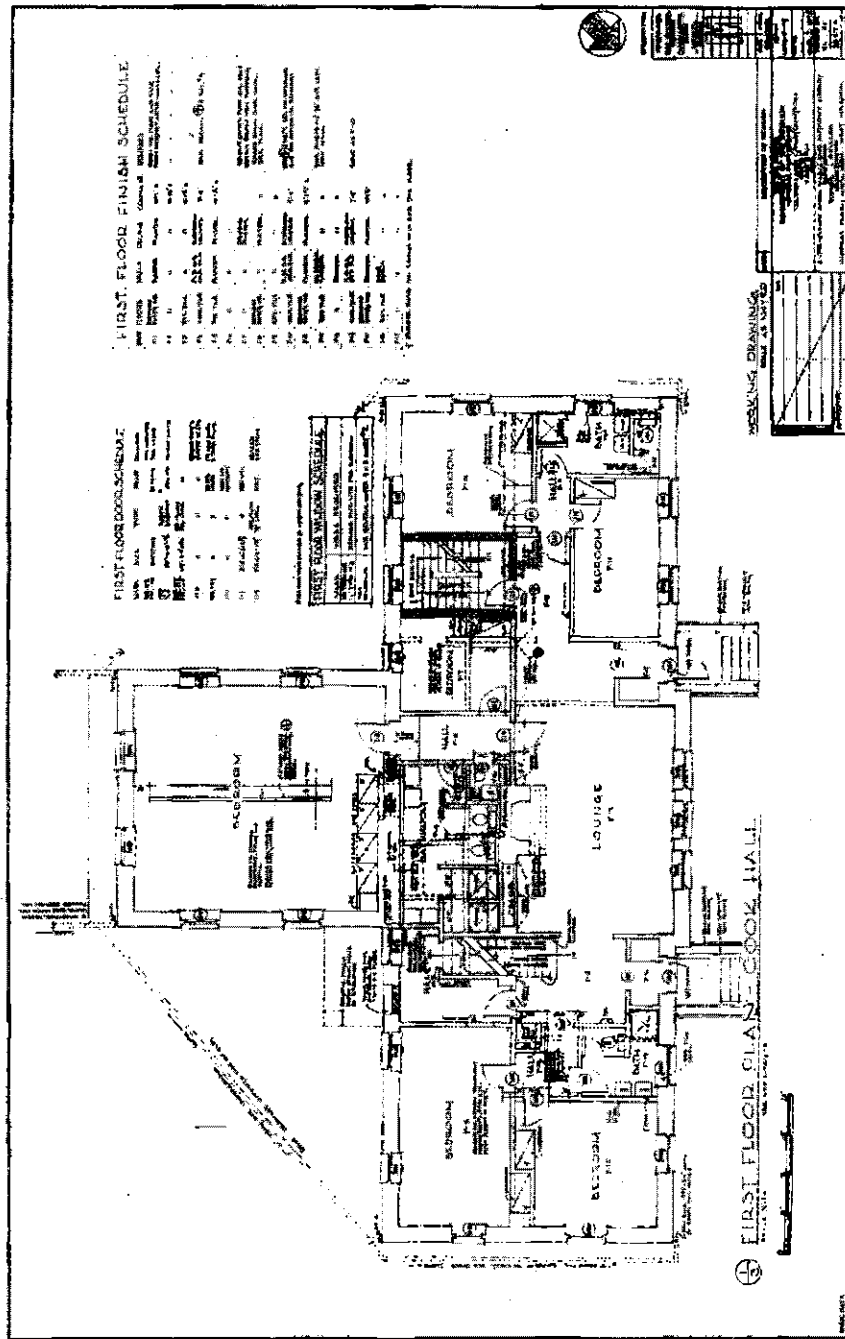


fig. 4. First-floor plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFÉ.

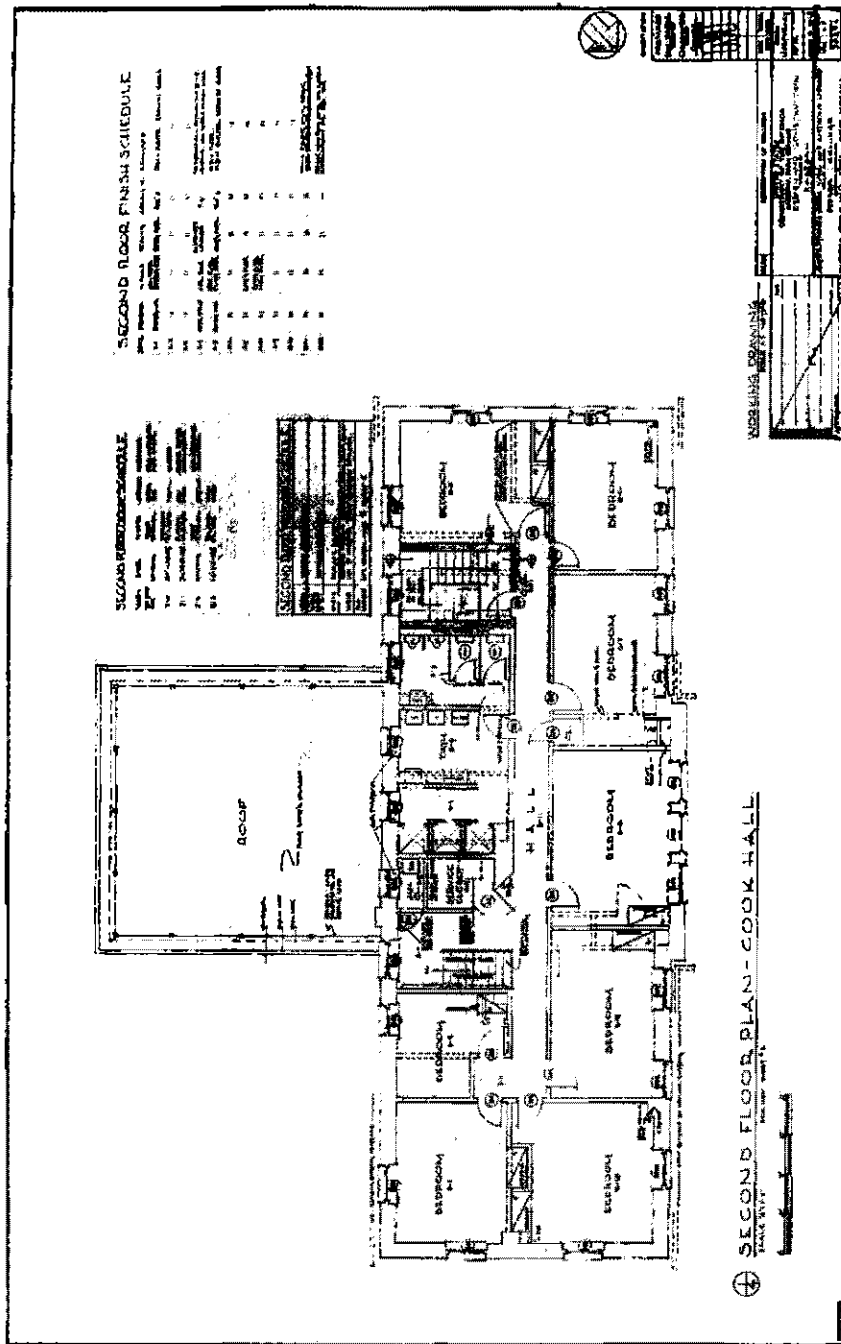


fig. 5. Second-floor plan, Cook Hall, showing intended changes during the National Park Service renovation in 1962-63. HAFE.