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Magazine of the

Jefferson County Historical Society

Volume XCI
December 2025

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Magazine of the

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



In Continuous Annual Publication Since 1935

Volume XCI **December 2025**

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"History by apprising them [citizens] of the past will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men; it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume; and knowing it, to defeat its views."

Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query 14, 1781

"It is history that teaches us to hope."

Robert E. Lee, letter to Charles Marshall, 1870

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JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Organized May 21, 1927

To identify, present, preserve and promote the history of Jefferson County

www.jeffersonhistoricalwv.org

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Membership: Open to all who have an interest in the History of Jefferson County. Dues: Student $15.00, Individual $25.00, Family $50.00, Patron $100.00, and Life Membership $500.00 may be sent to JCHS Treasurer, P. O. Box 485, Charles Town WV25414. All dues must be paid no later than September 30. Dues paid after September 30 will be credited to the following year.

PUBLICATIONS AND SALES ITEMS

BOOKS:

A Bicentennial History of Jefferson County, West Virginia 1801-2001. 2001. $8 each.

Between the Shenandoah and Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia. (**Book**) Jefferson County Historical Society. 1991. $40 each.

Burials in Jefferson County West Virginia. Compiled by Hugh E. Voress. 1998. $15 each.

Calendar and Index to Recorded Plats in the Jefferson County, West Virginia (Virginia), Courthouse, 1801-1901. By Michael D. Thompson. 1984. $20 each.

Charles Town Bicentennial 1786-1986. 1986. $10 each.

Prominent Men of Shepherdstown 1762-1962. By A. D. Kenamond. 1963. $10 each.

Tombstone Inscriptions, Jefferson County, W. Va. 1687-1980. Bee Line Chapter, NSDAR. $20 each.

The Washington Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia. Jefferson County Historical Society. 1985. $10 each.

MAGAZINES:

The Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society. For the years 1935-through the current year $15 each.

NOTE: An index of articles which appear in the Magazine is available on the "Magazine and Guardian" tab of the Society's web page.

GUEST PUBLICATIONS:

And So I Did: Stories of Shepherdstown. By James C. Price. 2012. $25 each.

And So I Did: Stories of Shepherdstown. Volume 2. By James C. Price. 2012. $25 each.

The Civil War Years in Jefferson County. By P. Douglas Perks. 2022. $25 each.

Military Operations in Jefferson County Virginia (now West Virginia) 1861-1865. Edited with an Introduction by James C. Holland. 2004. $15 each.

DVDS:

Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: A Visual History of Jefferson County. Jefferson County Historical Society. 1991. $10 each.

The Civil War in Jefferson County. Jefferson County Historical Society. 2012. $10 each.

GEAR:

Hats (Black, Navy, & White). $10 each.

NOTECARDS:

Set of 10 notecards with envelopes. Photographs from *Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County.* $5 each.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

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EDITORS' NOTE

No that's not a misplaced apostrophe in the title for this page of the 2025 edition of the *Magazine*. This year a committee is responsible for gathering the many pieces that make up the Society's annual publication. We are grateful to Debbie Piscitelli who masterfully performed all these tasks as editor for the past two years, and we hope that we can carry on her level of dedication.

A major event occurred in "Mister Jefferson's County" this year. Our first article commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Bee Line March that saw a company of nearly 100 volunteers from the area respond to the desperate call for help from General George Washington, who was facing the British in Boston in the early period of the American Revolution. Author P. Douglas Perks reaches deep into original material to describe the march and the men who made it.

Many books and articles have detailed the history of Storer College in Harpers Ferry over the years, including a number in the Magazine. Among these are "Lockwood House" in the 1961 edition; "Storer College and its Role in Assisting African Americans in Securing Homes in Jefferson County," (2004); and "Reverend Nathan Brackett and the Founding of Storer College," (2017). Our second article this year by Lynn Pechuekonis focuses not on the institution of the school, but rather on the life of the community fostered by the school through the story of Louisa Cornelius Jackson who was born into slavery, became a member of the first class of students of Storer College, and lived in the Harpers Ferry area community until her death at age 99 in 1954.

Lastly, a reprint of an article from the 1941 edition of the *Magazine* gives a look at the early—pre-bedroom community of the Shannondale area of the county.

Thank you to all those who have helped with this year's edition of the *Magazine*, especially to David Albin of Progressive Printing who has been patient with the work "by the muddling of the committee."

As always, we look forward to articles for next year's edition of the *Magazine*. Family lore, lives of Jefferson Countians, stories of houses and properties, and many other tales lie waiting to be discovered in the history of Jefferson County. Please let us know your ideas at jeffersonhistoricalwv.org.

"The Committee"

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250th Anniversary of the Bee Line March

P. Douglas Perks



Author's Photo

Rededication of the Spirit Of 1775 Monument

In the summer of 1932, as the Nation commemorated the 200th anniversary of the birth of General George Washington, Pack Horse Ford Chapter National Society Daughters of the

American Revolution (DAR) in Shepherdstown dedicated a monument to the "The Spirit of 1775." The monument commemorated Captain Hugh Stephenson's Rifle Company's Bee Line March to Cambridge, Massachusetts. The monument was originally located along the Kearneysville Pike at the top of the farm lane which led to Jacob Morgan's home, Falling Spring.

In 2012, the monument was moved to a safer location just inside the entrance of Elmwood Cemetery and rededicated by Pack Horse Ford Chapter.

On June 7, 2025, the monument was once again rededicated with an impressive wreath laying ceremony conducted by the Pack Horse Ford Chapter DAR. The ceremony was part of the month-long commemoration of the Bee Line March. The Jefferson County Historical Society donated funds to purchase the flagpole seen behind the monument. To honor the men of Stephenson's Rifle Company, the Gadsden flag, modified with the words "Liberty Or Death," will fly from July 17, 2025, until January 1, 2026. The Gadsen flag was chosen because it was referenced in Alexander Robinson Boteler's *My Ride to the Barbecue*. On January 1, 2026, the Gadsden flag will be replaced by the Continental Colors (Grand Union flag) which will fly until June 14, 2027. At that time the Continental Colors will be replaced by the First US flag (Betsy Ross flag), adopted by the Second Continental Congress on June 14, 1775. The First US flag will then be flown permanently.

"Set out from Potomack toward Boston" – the Bee Line" March

July 17, 2025, marked the 250th anniversary of the day when Captain Hugh Stephenson's Rifle Company left Mecklenburg, today's Shepherdstown. The Company was headed to Cambridge, Massachusetts, answering the call issued on June 14, 1775, by the Second Continental Congress to "join the army near Boston."[1] After a march of 26 days, the company of 94 Virginians arrived at their destination, where they joined two rifle companies from Maryland and six from Pennsylvania. The ten new companies united with militia from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island forming the Continental Army under the command of General George Washington.

On Wednesday, May 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress had convened in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, today called Independence Hall.[2] Twelve of the British colonies[3] sent delegates. Peyton Randolph, George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, Edmund Pendleton, Benjamin Harrison, and Richard Bland represented Virginia; and Peyton Randolph was chosen as the presiding officer.[4] With the Battles of Lexington and Concord fresh on their minds, on Wednesday, June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress authorized the creation of "six companies of expert rifflemen, be immediately raised in Pensylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia."[5] Once mustered in, the rifle companies were instructed to "march and join the army near Boston"[6] where they would be "employed as light infantry, under the command of the chief Officer in that army."[7] NOTE: Original spellings within quotations have been retained.

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1 JOURNALS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS 1774-1789. EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL RECORDS IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BY WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD CHIEF, DIVISION OF MANUSCRIPTS. Volume II. 1775. May 10— September 20. WASHINGTON GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE. 1905. Page 89. Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/item/05000059/.

2 Department of State. Office of the Historian. Pennsylvania State House (Independence Hall), Philadelphia. https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/buildings/section3.

3 Georgia delegates did not arrive until July 1775.

4 Journals of the Continental Congress, Volume II, 1775, May 10-Septemeber 20, page 12.

5 Ibid. Page 89.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

Congress prescribed each company's composition declaring "that each company consist of a captain, three lieutenants, four serjeants, four corporals, a drummer or trumpeter, and sixty-eight privates,"[8] a total of 81 men. In addition, they authorized the following rates of pay:

> [A] captain @ 20 dollars per month ($814.40 today); a lieutenant @ 14 dollars ($541.58 today); a serjeant @ 8 dollars ($325.76 today); a corporal @ 7 1/3 dollars ($297.26 today); drummer or [trumpeter] @ 7 1/3 dollars; privates @ 6 2/3 dollars ($271.60 today)

To pay for the army and other related expenses, Congress authorized the issue of what became known as Continental Currency in the following amounts: 49,000 $8 bills, 49,000 $7 bills, 49,000 $6 bills, 49,000 $5 bills, 49,000 $4 bills, 49,000 $3 bills, 49,000 $2 bills, 49,000 $1 bills, and 11,800 $20 bills for a total of 403,800 bills valued at $2,000,000.[9]

Two days after the Continental Army was established, George Washington was advised that "the Congress had by a unanimous vote" chosen him "to be general and com[mander] in chief" of the army "raised, in defence of American Liberty."[10] "Whereupon Colonel Washington, standing in his place, spoke as follows":

> MR. PRESIDENT,
> Tho' I am truly sensible of the high Honour done me, in this Appointment, yet I feel great distress, from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust: However, as the Congress desire it, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their

8 Ibid.

9 Journals of the Continental Congress, Volume II, 1775, May 10-Septemeber 20, pages 105-106.

10 Journals of the Continental Congress, Volume II, 1775, May 10-Septemeber 20, pages 91-92.

service, and for support of the glorious cause. I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their approbation.

But, lest some unlucky event should happen, unfavourable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered, by every Gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the Command I am honored with.

As to pay,[11] Sir, I beg leave to assure the Congress, that, as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to have accepted this arduous employment, at the expence of my domestic ease and happiness, I do not wish to make any proffit from it. I will keep an exact Account of my expences. Those, I doubt not, they will discharge, and that is all I desire.[12]

Washington remained in Philadelphia until he received his commission on Monday, June 19th. Once officially in charge, he offered advice regarding his command staff but soon set off for Massachusetts. He arrived in Cambridge on Monday, July 3rd and assumed command of the Continental Army.[13]

Within a matter of days of the June 14th Congressional mandate, it was decided that both of Virginia's rifle companies would be recruited in the Shenandoah Valley.[14] The principal focus of counties east of the Blue Ridge Mountain was to concentrate on

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11 Congress had authorized "five hundred dollars, per month, be allowed for his pay and expences."

12 Journals of the Continental Congress, Volume II, 1775, May 10-Septemeber 20, pages 91-92.

13 Library of Congress. George Washington's Commission as Commander in Chief: Primary Documents in American History. https://guides.loc.gov/washington-commission.

14 The 2 Maryland rifle companies were formed in Frederick County, Maryland. With Shepherdstown as the center, the 4 companies from Virginia and Maryland were recruited from within a circle with a 20-mile radius.

enforcing the trade restrictions on Great Britian imposed by the First Continental Congress.[15] This made it expedient to turn to the men of western Virginia to answer the call. In 1770 there were four counties in western Virginia: Augusta, Botetourt, Frederick, and Hampshire. Frederick County, founded in 1738 and situated in the Lower Shenandoah Valley,[16] was not the largest in terms of land area but was the most heavily populated of the four. In 1772, because of increased settlement and a corresponding rise in population, Frederick County was divided into thirds, and two new counties were formed from within her borders. The northernmost of the three was named Berkeley, in honor of Norborne Berkeley baron de Botetourt; Frederick County anchored the middle third; and the southern county was called Dunmore[17], in honor of John Murray fourth earl of Dunmore. The decision was made that one rifle company would be recruited in Berkeley County, and one would come from Frederick County.

Once it was decided that the men of Berkeley County would be called upon to form a company, it was up to the Berkeley County Committee of Safety to decide who would take command. In a letter written years after the American Revolution, Henry Bedinger[18] had this to say about the man selected for the job:

> Captain Hugh Stephenson of Berkeley, & Daniel Morgan[19] of Frederick were selected to raise and command these companies, being the first Regular troops required to be raised in the State of Virginia for Continental Service.[20]

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15 The First Continental Congress called for an end to imports from Great Britain by December 1774 and an end to exports to Great Britian by September 1775.

16 Because the Shenandoah River flows from south to north, the northern part of the Valley is lower in elevation than the southern part of the Valley.

17 When Dunmore fell out of favor, in 1778 the county was renamed Shenandoah.

18 Henry Bedinger was 4th Sergeant in the rifle company named for its captain, Hugh Stephenson.

19 Michael Cresap and Thomas Price were chosen to lead the Maryland rifle companies.

20 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Danske Dandridge. The Michie Company, Printers. Charlottesville, Virginia. 1910. Page 79. The quote comes from a letter written by Henry Bedinger to Samuel Berkeley Finley. Finley had written Bedinger inquiring about his father's,

Furthermore, Bedinger pointed out that "Captain Hugh Stephenson's rendez-vous was Shepherd's Town (not Martinsburg)."[21] Mecklenburg[22] was the most plausible location for the rifle company to meet for one simple reason: although there were numerous settlements in Berkeley County, in 1775 Mecklenburg, founded in 1762, was the only established town. Martinsburg, which would be tapped as Berkeley's county seat, wasn't established until 1778. Bath, later Berkeley Springs, was established in 1776 and although there was a settlement at Robert Harper's ferry, the town wasn't established until 1851. Charlestown was a post-American Revolution town, founded in 1786.

To complete the officer corps, the Committee of Safety chose three lieutenants. William Henshaw was appointed 1st Lieutenant, George Scott as 2nd Lieutenant, and Abraham Shepherd was named 3rd Lieutenant.[23] Although not authorized by Congress, the Committee chose to add another officer and tapped William Pyle to serve as Ensign. Showing remarkable foresight, Dr. Garratt Tunison, Mecklenburg's "resident practicing physician," was chosen to serve as the company's surgeon. When the company arrived at Cambridge, Tunison became the surgeon for all four of the Virginia and Maryland companies. Local musician Stephen Varden was tapped to be the company's drummer.

According to Henry Bedinger, "our company was raised in less than a week,"[24] and the men who enlisted for one year "presentedthemselves from every direction in the vicinity of these

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Samuel Finley, military career, especially as a member of Stephen's company and the Bee Line March.

21 Ibid.

22 Shepherdstown was called Mecklenburg until December 2, 1793, when the town was named Shepherds Town in honor of town founder Thomas Shepherd and then Shepherdstown after the Civil War.

23 Thomas Hite was named 3rd Lieutenant but declined to serve. Abraham Shepherd was his replacement.

24 The official muster date for both Stephenson's and Morgan's companies was June 22, 1775. Both Cresap and Price's companies from Maryland mustered in the day before on June 21, 1775.

towns."[25] Those who volunteered were described as both "young men of character"[26]and "eager, hot-blooded young men, the very pick and flower of old Berkeley."[27] There are two extant copies of the muster roll for Stephenson's Rifle Company. One appeared in Dandridge's *Historic Shepherdstown*[28] and the other in Bushong's *Historic Jefferson County*[29].

Once the ranks were filled, Captain Stephenson "found it necessary," in order to round out the company's organization, that four sergeants and four corporals should be elected. In addition, he "insisted the Company should elect them from themselves."[30] After some consideration, the men of the company chose the following to serve as their noncommissioned officers:

1st Sergeant Samuel Finley	1st Corporal John Crawford
2nd Sergeant William Kelly	2nd Corporal David Miller
3rd Sergeant Josiah Flagg	3rd Corporal Henry Barratt
4th Sergeant Henry Bedinger	4th Corporal George Michael Bedinger[31]

Although honored by their election, initially the newly minted sergeants and corporals didn't think that their rank had "much consequence."[32] But in June 1776, when their enlistment was up, the men discovered that their commissions "had in the end considerable bearing in the line of promotion." This was particularly true in June 1776 when the Virginia and Maryland rifle companies were made part of the newly formed Maryland & Virginia Rifle Regiment. Stephenson was named colonel of the new regiment, both Abraham Shepherd and William Henshaw were promoted to captain, and Henry Bedinger and Samuel Finley were made lieutenants.

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25 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 79.
26 Ibid.
27 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 77.
28 Ibid. Pages 88-89.
29 Bushong, Millard K. *Historic Jefferson County*. Carr Publishing Company, Inc. Boyce, Virginia. 1972. Pages 497-498.
30 Ibid. Page 80.
31 Ibid. Pages 80 and 88.
32 Ibid.

Depending on the source, the size of Stephenson's company is reported to have been anywhere from 94 to 100 men. As previously stated, muster rolls of Stephenson's company appear in both Danske Dandridge's book *Historic Shepherdstown* and Dr. Millard Bushong's *Historic Jefferson County*. Dandridge acknowledged that as far as she knew "a complete muster roll" of the company "has never been printed." However, from an unnamed source, she came upon "a little receipt book that had belonged to Captain Stephenson." The book, "six inches long by three inches wide and bound in doe-skin," was dated "Roxbury Camp January 1st, 1776" and listed the names of 84 men in Stephenson's company who were paid on that date. Additional research using "old letters" and "a journal written by one of the sergeants of the company," Dandridge was able to add the names of 10 men resulting in a muster roll containing the names of 94 men. The muster roll was printed in Dandridge's book with this caveat:

> Tradition names several others who may have been among the number, but I have thought it best to confine myself to the names in the little receipt book, and a few others mentioned by name in the journal to which I have referred, part of which will be given later.

Dr. Bushong lists the Muster Roll of Captain Hugh Stephenson's Company 1775-1776 in Appendix A of his book *Historic Jefferson County*.[33] He cites Dandridge as his source. For that reason, I've relied on Dandridge's *Historic Shepherdstown* as my source.

As much as I'd like to, I cannot relate something about all of the men in Stephenson's company. If you are interested, on pages 298- 359 in Appendix A of her book *Historic Shepherdstown*, Dandridge has provided an "Alphabetical List of Officers and Privates Connected with Shepherdstown, or Recruited in its Neighborhood, During the Revolution." The list includes a brief biographical sketch of each

33 Bushong. Pages 497-498.

man named. I have chosen a select few to illustrate the experiences of the Men of 1775. My apologies to those unnamed.

William Anderson: William re-enlisted in June 1776 in Captain Abraham Shepherd's Company. On November 16, 1776, he was captured at the Battle of Fort Washington. "Joined the British Army to save his life."

William McCue: In his journal, Henry Bedinger recorded the following, "on April 9, 1776 William McKue of our Company had the Misfortune to have his Left hand Blown off by firing his rifle which Bursted above half the length of the Barrel open, Blew away the lock and Tore his hand in a shocking manner, so that it has been Taken off at the Wrist." McCue was awarded a pension of $40 per month for his injury.

Adam Sheetz: Adam was the brother of gunsmiths Henry and Philip Sheetz. In June 1776 he re-enlisted in Captain Abraham Shepherd's Company. On November 16, 1776, he was captured at the Battle of Fort Washington "but soon exchanged." Later served in Captain Mathew Jouett's Company and in Colonel Daniel Morgan's 7th Virginia Regiment.

John Curry: John "deserted to the British in the night" on February 27, 1776.

Michael Engle: Michael was the brother of Philip Engle. In June 1776 he reenlisted "in one of the companies raised in Berkeley in 1776 [either Abraham Shepherd's or William Morgan's company]. Engle "Died on a prison ship."

Patrick Vaughan: Patrick re-enlisted in June 1776 in Captain Abraham Shepherd's Company. "He died Nov. 13th, 1776, perhaps in a skirmish with the enemy, but more probably in hospital, as the pay roll says 'died', not 'killed.'"

George & William Tabb: In October 1775 "on hearing of the death of another brother these young men obtained a discharge." Their discharge:

> By order of His Excellency, George Washington, esq., General and Commander in Chief of the Army of the United Colonies.
>
> Whereas the bearers, William and George Tabb, riflemen in Major Stevenson's Company, having served with courage and fidelity all the time of their continuance in the Army, and with due obedience to their officers, but by the unfortunate death of their elder brother it is necessary for the settlement of their private affairs and for the assistance of the widow and children of their deceased brother that they should be gratified in having their discharge and permission to return to their home, they are here by discharged. Given at the camp before Boston, October 3, 1775.
>
> By his Excellency's command, to all it may concern.
>
> Horatio Gates, Adj. General[34]

34 Virginia Historical Magazine, Year Ending December 31, 1914, Vol. XXII, by the Virginia Historical Society. HathiTrust. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3624051&seq=94&q1=George+Tabb&format=plaintext

George Shaner: George was a private from Shepherdstown who served in the Virginia Line. In 1835 he was still living in Shepherdstown and was drawing a pension.

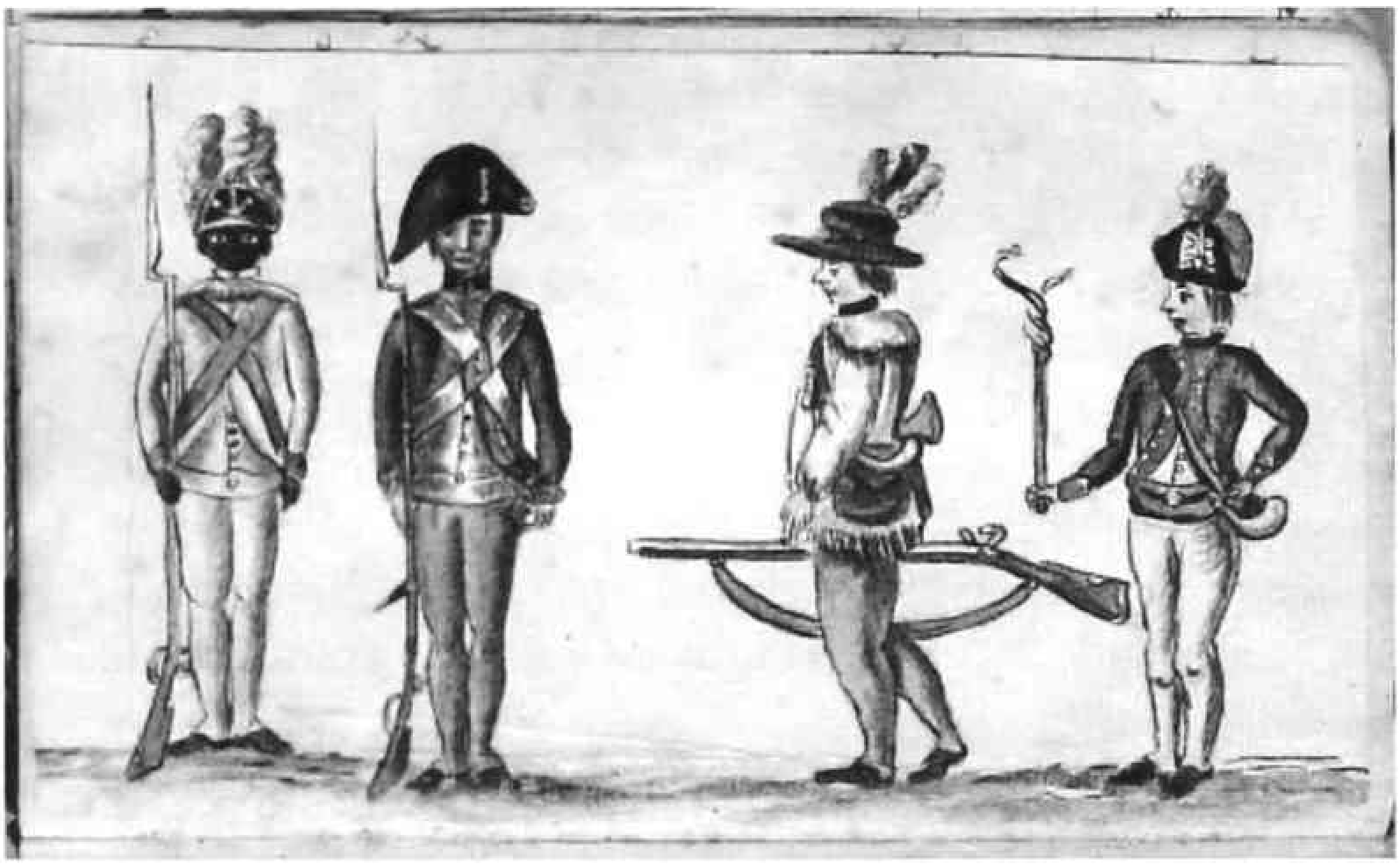
William Hulse: William enlisted in Captain Stephenson's company in 1775. After the Revolution, he moved to St. Clairsville, Ohio.

Robert White: Robert was appointed 2nd Lieutenant in a company of the 12th Virginia Regiment under Colonel James Wood when the Continental Army reorganized in 1776. He was badly wounded on June 26, 1777, at the Battle of Short Hills in New Jersey. After the war he became a distinguished Jurist in Frederick County, Virginia.

Abraham Shepherd: Abraham was the youngest son of Thomas Shepherd. He was 3rd lieutenant in Stephen's Company replacing Thomas Hite who had declined to serve. When the company was reorganized in June 1776, Shepherd was made captain. In November 1776, he was taken prisoner at the Battle of Fort Washington and remained a prisoner until paroled in 1778 and allowed to return home. He took no further part in the war.

Josiah Swearingen: Josiah was born "near Mecklenburg" in 1744, the son of Van Swearingen. He was promoted to captain and served with General Edward Hand at Fort Pitt.

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress authorized a company that included 12 officers, plus either a drummer or a trumpeter, and 68 privates for a total of 81 men. In addition to the 81 officers and men authorized by Congress, Stephenson's Company added an Ensign, a Surgeon, and an additional 11 privates for a total of 94 men. These totals show an increase in the amount of men above the original authorization.



Soldiers in Uniform. This watercolor from the American War of Independence is by Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger. Pictured are a Black soldier of the First Rhode Island Regiment, a New England militiaman, a **frontier rifleman**, and a French officer. The **frontier rifleman** is shown in dress similar to that of Stephenson's Rifle Company.

Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/item/2021669876/.

Not yet ready to establish a military uniform, the Continental Congress simply said that the men who answered the call to arms were "to find their own arms and cloaths."[35] There are three sources which describe the outfits of Stephenson's company. One source was Henry Bedinger's first-person account in his letter to Samuel Berkeley Finley.[36] According to Bedinger, each man was outfitted with:

35 Journals of the Continental Congress. Page 90.

36 Samuel Berkeley Finley's father, Samuel, was the 1st Sergeant of Stephenson's Rifle Company.

> [A]n approved Rifle, handsome shot pouch, and powder-horn, blanket knapsack, with such decent clothing as should be prescribed, but which was at first ordered to be only a Hunting shirt and pantaloons, fringed on every edge, and in Various ways.[37]

Alexander Robinson Boteler, born in 1815, claimed to have talked about the Bee Line March with men who had made the 26-day journey.[38] Writing in the pamphlet *My Ride to the Barbecue*, he provided a little more detail to what the men wore and added a couple of items:

> [T]hey adopted homespun hunting-shirts, made of tow linen (fringed around the neck and down the front), leather leggings and moccasins. Each wore a buck-tail in his hat, and had a tomahawk and scalping-knife in his belt.[39]

After reading *My Ride to the Barbecue*, Danske Dandridge, in her book *Historic Shepherdstown*, added yet another detail "not mentioned by Mr. Boteler:"

> [E]ach of Stephenson's riflemen had the words "Liberty or Death," the famous exclamation of Patrick Henry in his immortal speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses, embroidered upon the breast of his hunting shirt.[40]

Afterwards, regarding the attire of Stephenson's men, Dandridge

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37 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 79.

38 Henry Bedinger could have been the source of Boteler's account. Bedinger lived in Berkely County. He died in 1843 at **Altona,** the home of his daughter Elizabeth and her husband Braxton Davenport.

39 My Ride to the Barbecue or, Revolutionary Reminiscences of the Old Dominion by An Ex-Member of Congress. With Twenty Illustrations. New York: Published by S. A. Rollo. 169 and 170 Fulton Street, opposite St. Paul's Church. 1860. Forgotten Books. FB &c Ltd, Dalton House, 60 Windsor Avenue, London, SW 19 2RR. 2015.

40 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 93.

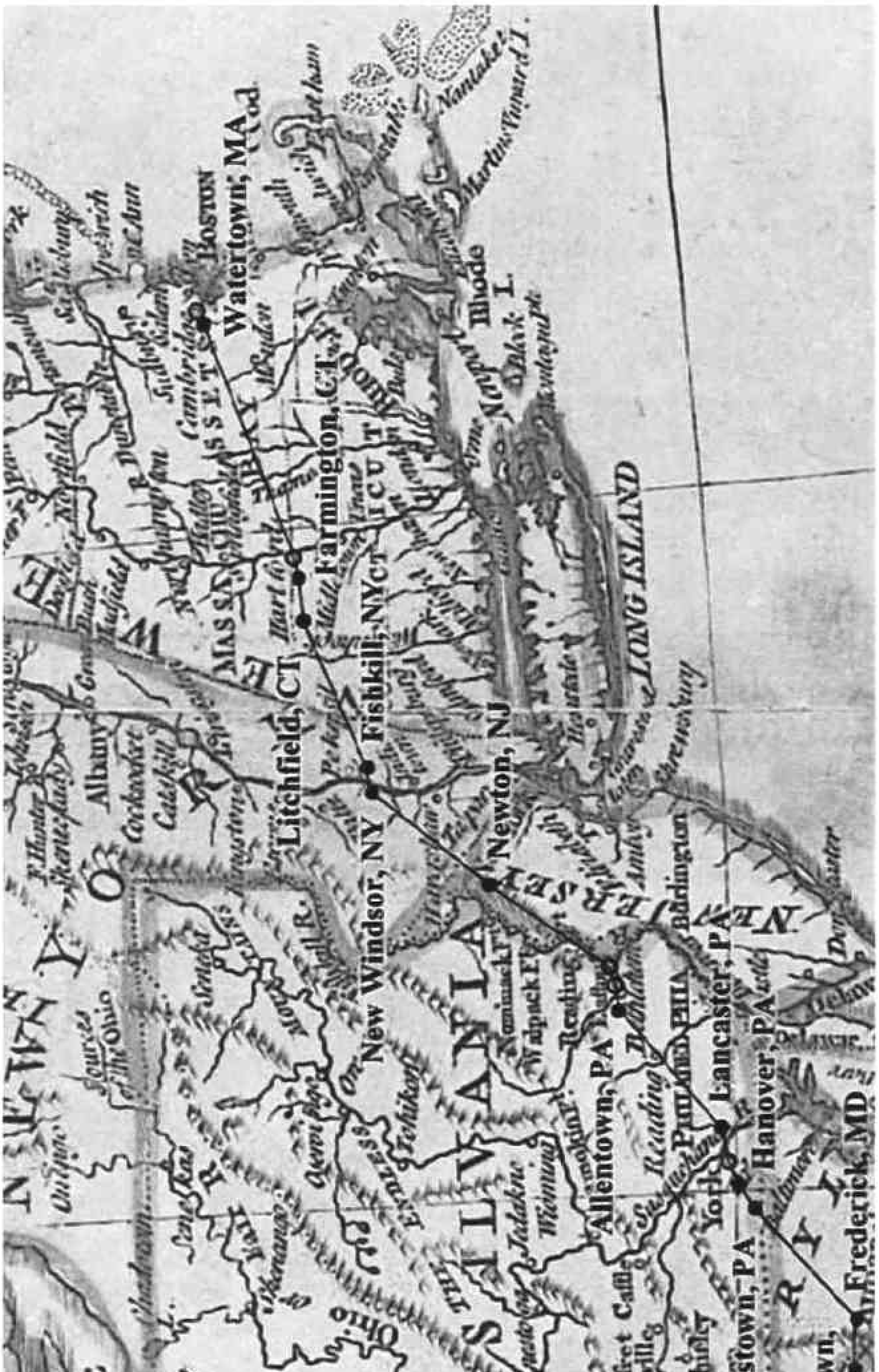
lamented, "What a pity it is that not one of these famous hunting shirts has been preserved!" A simple explanation for the absence of these relics could be that after their one-year enlistment was up, the hunting shirts and other gear worn by these Patriots were worse for wear.

Although Stephenson's company had a full roster by June 22, 1775, they were delayed in following the order to "as soon as compleated, shall march and join the army near Boston."[41] Henry Bedinger, in his letter to Samuel Berkely Finley, offered this explanation for the holdup:

> These companies being this unexpectantly called for, it was a difficult task to obtain rifles of the quality required & we were detained at Shepherd's Town nearly six weeks before we could obtain such.[42]

In his book *Arms Makers of Maryland*, Daniel D. Hartzler lent support to Bedinger's claim. Writing about gunsmiths during the American Revolution, Hartzler noted that Thomas Worley, Philip Sheetz, and Henry Sheetz "of Mecklenburg in the County of Berkley" signed a document on May 28, 1776, offering to make "twenty-four good and well fixt Rifle guns per month, at the rate of Four Pounds and Ten shillings."[43] Willing to serve but unprepared to march off to war, an unknown number of the 94 men in Stephenson's company had to wait for an approved rifle made by local gunsmiths like the Sheetz brothers. And that took time.

41 Journals of the Continental Congress. Page 89.
42 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Pages 79-80.
43 Daniel D. Hartzler. *Arms Makers of Maryland*. George Shumway. York, Penn. 1977. Page 275.



Route of the Bee Line March.

Courtesy Historic Shepherdstown Commission.

Finally, on the morning of Monday, July 17, 1775, Stephenson's company was ready to march.[44] Fortunately, one of the men, 4th Sergeant Henry Bedinger, kept a journal in which he made daily observations of his first year as a soldier in the Continental Army. At the end of day one, Bedinger wrote:

> JULY 17th, 1775. Set out from Patomack toward Boston and Encamped at the Mirey springs[45] about Three miles from Sharpsburgh.[46]

Getting into marching shape would take time. Their first day's journey covered approximately eight miles.

By mid-week the company reached Frederick, Maryland, where they received a hero's welcome. This is how Bedinger described what turned out to be an elaborate parade:

> Marched to Frederick Town [Frederick, Maryland] where Two Company of Independents met us about Three Miles from the Town. We marched before them into the Town. They then Marched by us and we halted, and we followed them out of town, when they Halted and we passed by. As soon as we Got Passed them they Gave three Loud Shouts and Turned and Left us. We also Answered them and made off. Thence we Crossed Monocosy, and Encamped at Mr. Yenlie's.[47]

The company's warm reception in Frederick would be repeatedly replicated in each town or village along the route to Cambridge.[48] Assuming that Morgan, Cresap, and Price followed the same route,

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44 Daniel Morgan left Winchester on Friday, July 14, 1775. Michael Cesap and Thomas Price left Frederick, Maryland on Tuesday, July 18, 1775.

45 Likely to be Keedysville Spring which is east of Keedysville and feeds Little Antietam Creek.

46 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 97.

47 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 97.

48 Ibid. Pages 97-101.

residents were aware not only that Stephenson's company was on the way, but they clearly understood the importance of their mission. The warm welcome the men received was a strong indication of the public's support for the challenge that the men had accepted.

It appears that although the men were well outfitted, they were traveling light, essentially living off the land. Whether treated to a meal in a local church, in a private home, or at a local tavern, most times Bedinger recorded that Stephenson's men were "Used Extremely Honorable"[49] meaning that on a scale of one to five the meal would receive four or five stars. Occasionally, they struck a rock. When the company camped at Sussex Courthouse,[50] instead of the usual positive review Bedinger reported that their hosts, "the Butcher and Landlady Used the Company Very Ill."[51] But for the most part the men were deservedly treated like heroes.

After being on the march for a fortnight, the company reached "East Town"[52] were they made camp. The men rested the next day and perhaps for the first time "Got our Ammunition Ready, Guns in order, and tried them." Although many of them were experienced riflemen, some had new weapons recently acquired from either the Sheetz brothers or another Berkeley County gunsmith. Now was the time to become familiar with their new guns. The next day, Sunday, July 30th, the march resumed and after an 18-mile trek, the company camped for the night. Within days they were in New York and on Tuesday, August 3rd they camped at Fishkill. They were soon in Connecticut marching through Litchfield, Farmington, and Hartford, "the Metropolis of Connecticut" where they camped.[53] As they drew nearer their destination, the marches became more intense. After they crossed the Connecticut River at Hartford, they marched 25 miles before stopping to camp. The next day they marched 27 miles before halting, and the day following they made 29 miles before stopping at a "Tavern where there were Three Girls.

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49 Ibid. Page 97.
50 Sussex Courthouse is near the New Jersey's border with New York.
51 Ibid. Page 100.
52 Easton, Pennsylvania.
53 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 101.

Had some Diversion."[54] The next day they marched 16 miles before stopping for breakfast, then continued nine miles to Water Town and from there three and a half miles to "Head Quarters in Cambridge, Being Friday, 11th August."[55] All told, the Bee Line March took 26 days covering almost 600 miles. Taking into account one day of rest on July 29th, that's an average of 24 miles per day. After leaving Virginia, they traveled through six states spending three and a half days in Maryland, ten days in Pennsylvania, two days in New Jersey, three days in New York, four in Connecticut, and three and a half days in Massachusetts before joining General Washington in Cambridge.

With just three exceptions, the company made the journey unscathed. The first was an accident that occurred across the Susquehanna River from York, Pennsylvania. The ferry couldn't carry the entire company at one time, so while waiting for their companions to cross, "Several went to the Tavern on the Lancaster side." It appears that a combination of insufficient firearms instruction plus the fruits of the tavern (or maybe boys being boys!) ended when "James Higgins Shott a wad into William Blair's Legg."[56] The incident resulted in Blair being "disabled to Walk, and we were soon obliged to Leave him in rear."[57] Seven miles east of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, John Keyes was left behind, described as being "very sick."[58] Within four miles of Reading, Pennsylvania, "Adam Sheets had such violent fits that we were afraid for his life. He Recovered but felt Very Unwell for a few days."[59] Considering the length of the journey and the number of men, one accident and two illnesses is not a bad track record. Although not authorized by Congress, the decision to enlist Dr. Garratt Tunison most certainly contributed to the fact that on Monday, January 1, 1776, Blair, Keyes, and Sheetz had regained their health and were among the men who received their pay.

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54 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 101

55 Morgan's company arrived on Sunday, August 6, 1775. Cresap and Price arrived on Wednesday, August 9, 1775.

56 Ibid. Page 98.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

The men of Stephenson's Rifle Company had signed a one-year enlistment, and in June 1776 their time was up. At the urging of General Washington, the Continental Congress authorized the creation of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment.[60] The new regiment would be composed of nine rifle companies – four from Maryland and five from Virginia.[61] Three of the companies raised in 1775[62] would form the core of the regiment and would be joined by four new rifle companies from Virginia and two new companies from Maryland. Based on his performance in the first year of the war, Captain Hugh Stephenson was promoted to the rank of colonel and given command of the new regiment. 3rd Lieutenant Abraham Shepherd was promoted to the rank of captain and given command of Stephenson's old company. Sergeants Samuel Finley, William Kelly, and Henry Bedinger were promoted and served as Shepherd's 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Lieutenants, respectively.[63] Washington also requested that the new regiment be enlisted for three years, which Congress approved.[64]

On June 24, 1776, Henry Bedinger wrote in his journal, "Just got Leave and made Ready to Start Home."[65] His return to Virginia was delayed by the news of the formation of a new rifle regiment and his promotion to lieutenant. By July 9th the regiment's organization was complete, and Captain Shepherd and Lieutenants Bedinger and Finley "were dispatched to Berkeley to recruit, and re-fill the old Company,[66] which we performed in about five weeks." After

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60 Hentz, Tucker F. *Unit History of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment* (1776–1781): Insights from the Service Record of Capt. Adamson Tannehill. 2007. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, E259 .H52 2007. http://www.vahistorical.org/research/tann.pdf.

61 Ibid. Page 5.

62 Stephenson's, Cresap's, and Price's companies.

63 *Unit History of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment*. Page 7.

64 Ibid. Page 5.

65 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 143.

66 A Muster Roll of Captain Abraham Shepherd's Rifle Company appears on pages 154-155

completing their recruitment assignment, Shepherd, Bedinger, and Finley led the new company on a second march to Massachusetts, where General Washington anxiously awaited their arrival. Unfortunately, Colonel Hugh Stephenson would not rejoin his men. Bedinger reported that "Colo Stephenson also returned to Virginia to facilitate the raising [of] the additional companies." While at home along the Bull Skin, in August Stephenson "was taken sick, and in four days died." Sadly, unlike many of his compatriots, to this day the last resting place for the man who led the Bee Line March remains unknown.

in Dandridge's *Historic Shepherdstown*.



THE MORGAN SPRINGS.

The Morgan Springs from *My Ride to the Barbecue*;

or, Revolutionary Reminiscences of the Old Dominion.

In 1825 the Shepherdstown community commemorated the Golden Jubilee of the Bee Line March. According to both Danske Dandridge and Alexander Boteler, the celebration was held to fulfill a promise made 50 years before. Dandridge wrote:

> Historians tell us that Congress ordered the rifle companies raised on the 14th of June. Before this time however, martial preparations were well under way, and on the tenth of June, the young volunteers were given a barbecue at "Stinson's Spring."[67]

> When the young recruits were about to separate for the night, they all arose, and taking hold of hands around the table solemnly pledged themselves, as many as survived, to meet again at that place *fifty years after*.[68]

Boteler had a different version. In his account, the men of Stephenson's company had a "frugal meal" on the morning of July 17, 1775, the day of their departure. At the meal's conclusion the men "rose from the grass" and received a blessing "after which, solemnly agreeing together that as many of them as might be alive on that day fifty years should meet again at Morgan's Spring."[69] Whether the pledge was made on June 10 or July 17, the fact remains that 50 years later the promise was made good.

Coverage of the celebration appeared in the June 12, 1825, issue of the *Virginia Free Press*[70] which reported that "a party of ladies and gentlemen repaired on Friday, the tenth of June [1825], to a spring (Mr. D. Morgan's)[71] near Shepherdstown, for the purpose

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67 Dandridge wrote that the Morgan's Spring was sometimes referred to as "Stephenson's Spring" and that Stinson was an alternative spelling for Stephenson.

68 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 84.

69 *My Ride to the Barbecue*. Pages 65-66.

70 The newspaper was originally called the *Harpers Ferry Free Press*. In 1824 Editor John S. Gallaher renamed it the *Virginia Free Press* and moved the paper from Harpers Ferry to Charles Town in 1832.

71 Daniel Morgan lived at *Poplar Grove*, today *Rose Brake*.

of celebrating the day, pursuant to an arrangement made 50 years before." Only five men were alive to fulfill the promise. 1st Sergeant Samuel Finley was living in Chillicothe, Ohio.[72] He died in 1829 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Private William Hulse lived in St. Clairsville, Belmont County, Ohio, where he died in 1830.[73] Private Robert White lived in Winchester, Virginia, where he died in 1831 after a lengthy career as a judge.[74] None of these men attended the June 10th celebration.

About the remaining survivors, the *Free Press* reported that "Out of the ninety-seven gallant spirits who composed the company...but two were present, namely, Major Henry Bedinger, of Berkeley County, Virginia, and Major M. [Michael] Bedinger, of Kentucky."[75] The paper also reported that in addition to the two men of Stephenson's rifle company "[A]] few of those who fought in '76, and one who survived the slaughter at St. Clair's defeat, were among the number at this celebration."[76]

Following "an elegant dinner given by Mr. Daniel Morgan,"[77] the celebrants were treated to a military parade replete with "colors flying and music playing." In a touching ceremony, "the sons and grandsons of his compeers in arms" were called forward, and Major Michael Bedinger "passed through the ranks and shaking each cordially by the hand." Following a salute fired by "a detachment of artillery led by Captain Harper," the band played a number of Patriotic songs. The musical concluded with Major Michael Bedinger singing two songs "that had been sung at that spot fifty years before." The celebration concluded with several toasts made to the strains of Auld Lang Syne. This would be the first of many celebrations commemorating the Men of 1775.[78]

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72 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Pages 316-317.
73 Hulse family network. Revolutionary War. http://www.hulsenet.net/revolutionary-war/.
74 Historic Shepherdstown. Pages 356.
75 Ibid. Page 295.
76 Ibid.
77 Daniel Morgan of Shepherdstown, not Daniel Morgan of Winchester.
78 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Pages 295-296. [They met once again 10 years later commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Bee Line March. You can read Henry Bedinger's de-

A part of Bee Line lore is the generally accepted notion that there was some agreement between Captain Daniel Morgan and Captain Hugh Stephenson that the two Virginia companies would meet at Fredrick, Maryland, and march together to join General Washington. According to that agreement, Morgan's company would leave from Winchester and cross the Potomac at Harpers Ferry. Stephenson would cross the Potomac at Mecklenburg, most likely aboard Swearingen's ferry, and join Morgan and his men at Frederick. Although the exact date of the agreed upon exodus is unclear, both Dandridge in *Historic Shepherdstown* and Dr. Bushong in his book *Historic Jefferson County* contend that Morgan and his men "stole a march on them [Stephenson's Rifle Company] a day or two before the time agreed upon for their departure."[79] Boteler, writing in *My Ride to the Barbecue*, takes it one step further claiming that Stephenson and his men were "the first company from the South that rallied to the side of Washington from South," further contending that "Morgan's riflemen reached the camp [at Cambridge] a day or two after Stephenson."[80] Agreement or not, the fact remains that Daniel Morgan left Winchester on July 14, 1775, crossed the Potomac at Harpers Ferry the next day, passed through Frederick, Maryland, on July 17th, and arrived at Cambridge on August 6th. As previously stated, Stephenson left on July 17th, marched through Frederick on the 19th, and arrived at Cambridge on August 11th.[81]

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scription of that barbecue in an article titled "Letter By Major Henry Bedinger" in Volume III, December 1937 of the *Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society*, pages 38-39.]

79 Dandridge page 93. Bushong pages 52-53.

80 Boteler pages 65-66.

81 Hentz. *Unit History of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Company*. Page 3.

Another piece of Bee Line lore is what took place when Stephenson's men reached Cambridge. In his journal, Sergeant Bedinger wrote that they left Watertown and marched the final "three Miles and a half to Head Quarters in Cambridge." He noted that the date of their arrival was "Friday, 11th August" and that upon arrival Stephenson's Rifle Company "Was Viewed By Generals Washington, Gates, and a Number of other Gentlemen."[82] In Boteler's version of their arrival, "Washington, who was making a reconnoisance in the neighborhood, descrying the Virginians in the distance, galloped up to meet them." According to Boteler, Captain Stephenson saluted General Washington and advised him that the company "from the right bank of the Potomac" was reporting for duty. Boteler further claimed General Washington jumped from his horse "unable to resist the impulse" and shook the hand of each man with "tears of joy rolling down his cheeks as he recognized his friends and fellow soldiers from the South."[83] Danske Dandridge notes that there is "no mention in" Sergeant Bedinger's journal "of the alleged meeting with General Washington." She adds that although Boteler's description of General Washington's behavior was "unlike the usual calm demeanor of the Father of his Country," it most certainly must have occurred "if Mr. Boteler's account has any historical foundation, which we suppose it has."[84] I'll leave it to the reader to decide whether Bedinger's or Boteler's or Dandridge's account is the most accurate.

In the summer of 1775, the fate of the American Colonies hung in the balance. Whether Daniel Morgan left a day or two early does not diminish the contributions to the cause of Independence made by both of Virginia's "companies of expert riflemen." As he prepared to face the might of the British military, General Washington was most certainly gratified, if not overjoyed, by the rapid response of the men from Virginia who marched to Cambridge to reinforce the Continental Army. What is most important is that all of those who

82 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 101.
83 *My Ride to the Barbecue*. Page 66.
84 *Historic Shepherdstown*. Page 102.

in the summer of 1775 answered the call "in defence of American Liberty" never be forgotten. Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

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Table of Contents

The Evolution of a Black Community in Post-War Harpers Ferry

By Lynn Pechuekonis

Perhaps it was news of a new school that enticed recently emancipated William and Susan Jackson over from Wheatland, Virginia, after the Civil War. Almost immediately on arrival in Harpers Ferry they enrolled their 12-year-old daughter Louisa in Storer Normal School, where she joined an inaugural class of 19 eager learners. Yet, Storer had more to offer the freedpeople than education. The symbiotic relationship that developed in the post-war decades between Storer and the enterprising Black families taking up residence in Harpers Ferry created conditions with fewer race-based barriers than was typical for a town in such a strongly Confederate-leaning southern county.

The inspiring story of Storer and its impact on the thousands of students across the region has been well documented over the past few decades. The Black community off campus has received far less attention. This article provides a broad overview of the initial evolution of post-war Black life within the municipality of Harpers Ferry from 1867 through 1900 – a period covering Reconstruction and the early decades of the Jim Crow era.[1]

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1 The scope of this article is limited to the community established within the boundaries of the Corporation of Harper Ferry after the war. It should be noted, however, that the town of Bolivar is immediately adjacent to Harpers Ferry, so residents often crossed boundaries between the two towns without conscious awareness. Due to the irregular Harpers Ferry boundary that wraps around Bolivar to the northwest—sometimes mid-street even—locations in Harpers Ferry were often misidentified as Bolivar in newspaper accounts and even by some residents. Thus, the influences and challenges of Harpers Ferry were often mirrored in Bolivar. Black churches, schools, and fraternal organizations served residents of both. And some Bolivar residents worked in Harpers Ferry, especially in jobs connected to the railroad station and pulp mill along the river and became part of its lore.

Louisa Cornelius Jackson is significant because she set down roots and remained in Harpers Ferry for the next 88 years. She married, owned land, built a home, served in a church, and raised children, who likewise attended Storer College and resided in Harpers Ferry. Her experience typifies as clearly as any African American's the exceptional circumstances that emerged in Harpers Ferry during this period and serves as a guide for this overview.

Pre-Civil War

Black people lived in Harpers Ferry well before John Brown's failed attempt to incite a slave rebellion there in 1859, many were attracted by jobs directly and indirectly related to the U.S. Armory and Arsenal. The 1850 census counted 87 free Blacks and 109 enslaved people residing in Harpers Ferry, among 1,551 Whites. Harpers Ferry edged out the county seat of Charles Town as the most populated town in Jefferson County, but its ratio of enslaved people was a minimal 6%, compared to Charles Town's 26% (28% in the county as a whole).

Everything changed once war came in 1861. It left the town's industry in ruins, damaged much of its architecture, separated it from Confederate Virginia, and attached it to the newly created Union state of West Virginia. Thousands of self-liberated people escaping slavery had flocked to the town for protection each time it was held by Union troops. Hundreds remained at war's end.[2]

In late 1865, the U.S. Freedmen's Bureau established an office in Harpers Ferry to help transition the freedpeople into a new, independent life. The federal government's decision to divest itself of its Harpers Ferry landholdings combined with the arrival of New England Freewill Baptist missionaries, conspired to create conditions for African Americans that were unique to the region.

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2 For example, see Gen. George W. Wingate, *History of the Twenty-Second Regiment of the National Guard of the State of New York*. Edwin W. Dayton, Pub., 1896, p. 85

Louisa's family arrived in town circa 1867, avoiding the worst of racial hostility. In mid-1865, with the Black population greatly outnumbering the White,[3] reports noted "considerable animosity" between "certain classes" of the Whites and the freedpeople. One newspaper reported that returning Union soldiers tried to "break up a colored prayer meeting, and on Saturday night last they demolished a refreshment saloon kept at the Ferry by an old colored man."[4] By the time the Jacksons arrived, they found that they had influential, if temporary, allies in the federal government and a more enduring friendship in a young Freewill Baptist minister named Nathan Brackett. In Brackett's enthusiasm for not only educating freedpeople but helping them thrive, he founded Storer Normal School and then enacted proactive policies around land ownership that had long-term effects on the broader community.

1865-1870
SETTING THE CONDITIONS

The Freedmen's Bureau assisted freedpeople past the many initial challenges of those early postwar years, connecting them with employment, food, clothing, and shelter, as well as facilitating establishment of new schools. As early as 1864, classes had been offered to the formerly enslaved refugees and continued more formally into late 1865.[5] To meet the overwhelming need for teachers in the new "separate but equal" Black schools, the Freedmen's Bureau cooperated with Brackett and his team of missionaries who established and initially staffed Storer Normal School, which was chartered as Storer College. This was the first of several significant actions impacting Harpers Ferry culture.

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3 *Washington Star*, September 15, 1865; "literally swarming with colored people" was the way Louise Brackett described the town, letter H. T. McDonald, September 6, 1917, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley archives)

4 *Wheeling Daily Register*, September 15, 1865, p. 2

5 For example, see *Sarah Jane Foster, teacher of the freedmen: A diary and letters*, Wayne E. Reilly (Ed.), University Press of Virginia, 1990: pp. 34-35.

The first was fortuitously tied to the second. Congress decided not to rebuild the Harpers Ferry National Armory and Arsenal, which had been destroyed during the war. Four brick mansions formerly occupied by armory officers sat vacant in the Upper Town section of Harpers Ferry known as Camp Hill. The government donated these buildings and seven acres of land on Fillmore Street to form the nucleus of the new school. For a quarter century after its founding Storer was the only institution in West Virginia providing a secondary education for Black students. The robust education provided there put thousands of graduates from the region on track for living wage jobs (where not stymied by Jim Crow restrictions). With no public secondary school for Black students anywhere in Jefferson County, Storer became the de facto local high school in smalltown Harpers Ferry. Thus, the impact of its administrators and teachers was amplified in the emerging Black community there.

As another consequence of the decision not to rebuild the arsenal, Congress ordered the divestment of the entire 1,670 acres held by the government in Harpers Ferry. In 1869, the Secretary of War began auctioning lots, opening up all of the town not previously settled. Several Black men, among them George Weaver, Thomas Jefferson, and James Harrison Robinson, bid on properties, taking advantage of the easy credit terms. No down payment was required, and purchasers had two years to pay.[6]

Even more significant for the Black community was that Nathan Brackett and other friends of Storer took advantage of this opportunity. They purchased numerous lots in 1869 and continued buying unclaimed properties in subsequent sales over the next 20 years. Some were held to expand the school's holdings. Brackett turned out to be an evangelist, not only of religion and education, but of land ownership. "When the time comes that the colored people of the South live in their own homes and cultivate their own farms

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6 Charles W. Snell, *The Acquisition and Disposal of Public Lands of the U.S. Armory at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, 1796-1885 — Volume I: A Narrative History*, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, December 1979; U. S. Census, 1860.

and read their own ballots there will no longer be a race problem," he forecast optimistically well into 1890s.[7]

Many of those lots initially deeded to Brackett[8] or Storer College were later resold, not exclusively but often, to Black buyers when their finances enabled them to pay the school's reasonable terms. In addition, the school owned the former Smallwood Farm in neighboring Bolivar, from which Brackett also sold lots. One immediate effect of these actions was to ensure land was available for sale to Black buyers, short-circuiting any potential for local White landowners to discriminate.

James Beckman described this phenomenon at length in the pages of this magazine, noting that initially, "Storer College assistance would ameliorate the effects of the harsh economic climate in Jefferson County in the years following the Civil War."[9] In 1897, Storer took public credit for encouraging African Americans to become owners of real estate.[10] The school revealed in its newsletter that for the past 30 years its administration had been loaning money to build homes and to purchase properties from other parties. More significantly, it had deeded its own properties in varying-sized lots to at least 42 Black men and women, who were named in the article.[11] Louisa's father William was on this list. He farmed land on the Smallwood allotment.[12] The 1870 and 1880 censuses confirm that William, Susan, and five of their children lived in Bolivar. Louisa presumably lived in Lockwood House, the first Storer dormitory, and her life continued from this point distinct from her parents.

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7 *Storer Record*, spring 1894

8 Sometimes deeded personally to Nathan Brackett and his wife Louise or to Brackett's sister Lura.

9 James A. Beckman, "Storer College and African American Home Ownership in Jefferson County," *The Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society*, 2004: pp. 80-87.

10 *Storer Record*, February 1897, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 2

11 Determining from the deed record exactly when individuals actually began living on a property is hampered by the fact that deeds were not issued until Storer received payment in full (*Storer Record*, February 1897, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 2

12 Jefferson County, West Virginia, Deed Book 4 page 267, signed March 12, 1869.

Home ownership was a key milestone for freedpeople, giving them a measure of independence and stability, a source of leverage for obtaining credit when needed, and with enough land to garden and keep livestock, self-sustainability. If they decided they preferred to live elsewhere, they could sell the property and use the proceeds to buy in a new location, which a number of Black families did, sometimes moving from Bolivar to Harpers Ferry or vice versa. When they sold, it was frequently to other Black people.

Not all Black buyers needed Brackett's financial assistance, but he continued as an ally to keep doors open. Black owners spread out among the entire Camp Hill/Upper Town section of Harpers Ferry before they could be crowded into a single exclusively black neighborhood, often obtaining ample-sized lots with good soil for gardens. They were "first class" class locations, "not in the slums or hollows, but on the beautiful hills, many of them occupying the finest sites in town."[13]

There is no evidence that African Americans were barred from owning land in any particular section of the town during this era. In 1869 entrepreneur George Weaver bought two lots on Shenandoah Street in the Lower Town commercial district, where most of the town's population had been concentrated before the war. Building on the low-lying properties along the river held serious risk, however. One large extended Black family, the Batemans, purchased land along the Shenandoah River. They sent their children to Storer and attended church with Brackett's Freewill Baptists. They were in the process of framing a house when on October 3, 1870, the Shenandoah River overflowed its banks and raged through Harpers Ferry. The entire Bateman family group, 22 in all, were sheltered in a single building when it was destroyed by the unprecedented flood. They were among the 45 Harpers Ferry residents who died that day, most of whom were Black. Twenty local houses were completely washed away, many more being seriously damaged. A "large portion" of those suffering destitution from these losses were also noted as being Black.[14]

13 *Storer Record*, Winter 1892, p. 2

14 *The Morning Star*, October 12, 1870; *Wheeling Daily Register*, October 6, 1870.

While many White residents chose to stay in the lower town commercial district even after the flood, Black residents mostly opted for Camp Hill and Bolivar, where they could own larger lots and stay safe from floodwaters.

One notable purchase in the 1869 auction was made on behalf of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, later known as John Wesley Methodist Episcopal. They paid cash for a lot on Fillmore Street[15] near Anthony Hall. The five church trustees were all listed as property owners themselves on the 1870 census.[16] This group may have formed the earliest Black congregation in town, organized as early as 1862 or 1863.[17]

At its inception in 1867, Storer was beset by hostile White local residents who objected to the New England missionaries—the so-called northern meddlers—and the freedpeople benefitting from their efforts. Louisa and her early Storer classmates endured harassment and sometimes feared for their safety. Brackett and his school eventually earned the grudging respect of many White residents. Yet, if the Harpers Ferry School district is any indicator, the town could still not be mistaken as welcoming to Blacks. It refused for 25 years to comply with state law requiring all communities with 15 (and later 10) Black children to provide a grade school for their education.

"It was not that the equal rights of colored children under the School law were forgotten, they were utterly disregarded," wrote J. C. Brubaker of the Freedmen's Bureau in August 1868. "The Bureau was quite willing, here as elsewhere, to assist the school officers in establishing a School, but their assistance was declined, and an obstinate determination evinced, to disobey the law." A petition was filed against the school district to compel them to expend tax

15 Jefferson County Deed Book 75, page 360

16 Ralph H. Lewis Historical Sketch of Camp Hill-Wesley Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV, 1996; United States Census, 1870.

17 *Spirit of Jefferson*, April 12, 1881, p. 2, which notes that the Colored Methodist Episcopal group tried to build a church in 1862 and 1863.

money for Black schools, tax money to which Black residents were contributing. The judge ruled against the district, and yet school officers continued to refuse their obligations. The Freedmen's Bureau closed its West Virginia office in October 1868 before it could further press its case on the school district. An 1872 report counted 58 Black children in the Harpers Ferry District. Their only means of education was provided by benevolent organizations, including Storer, which temporarily opened a primary department.[18]

At the time of the 1870 census, the state had combined Harpers Ferry and Bolivar into an enlarged Bolivar Township.[19] The census was taken in June—after nonresident Storer students had left town for the summer and prior to the October flood. Across the two towns, 433 people were designated as black or mulatto, which was 14.8% of the total population. The majority of Black men were farm laborers, some possibly on their own farms or working at Storer's Smallwood Farm property. Others worked for the railroad, or were skilled tradesmen (blacksmiths, coopers, plasterers, stone masons, woodcutters, carpenters, etc.). The challenges of racism remained, but the initial conditions for Black life in Harpers Ferry were set.

18 Stealey, John Edmund, III (Ed.), "Reports of the Freedmen's Bureau Operations in West Virginia: Agents in the Eastern Panhandle," *West Virginia History*, Fall 1980-Winter 1981: pp. 94-129; Stealey, "The Freedmen's Bureau in West Virginia," *West Virginia History*, Vol. 39, No. 2/3, 1978: pp. 99-139.

19 Ralph H. Lewis, *Historical Sketch of Camp Hill-Wesley Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry, WV*, 1996

GROWTH OF A COMMUNITY: 1870s-1890s

The next three decades saw not only the recovery of Harpers Ferry from its wartime misfortunes but the growth of Storer College and the burgeoning of the Black community, despite the rise of Jim Crow discrimination.

New Industry

The summer resort industry was sparked in the mid-1870s by Brackett's conversion of dormitories into vacation boarding houses after students left at the end of the academic year. To test the idea, he brought over Sarah and William Lovett from Winchester, who had been free Blacks before the war. Four of ten Lovett children had already graduated from Storer when the family took on proprietorship of the Lockwood House in summer 1876. The family rooted itself in the Harpers Ferry community, running the Lockwood House every summer until Storer closed it in 1926. Several Lovett daughters married and raised families in Harpers Ferry or Bolivar, some staying active in the Freewill Baptist Church associated with the school. The Lovetts' son Tom and his wife Lavinia eventually bought property two blocks over on Magazine Hill and opened the popular Hill Top House in 1890. This new tourism industry provided opportunities for domestic work, as well as related local businesses, such as providing daily fresh farm products and transporting guests to and from the train station.

Neighborhood Development

Storer College took advantage of additional government land auctions and sold more properties to Black men and women, most of whom had some connection to the school. Several were graduates now on staff or teaching at the school, like William H. Bell and Hamilton Hatter. Deeds to several lots on Fillmore Street during this era were held by Black women who were single or widowed, including Coralie Franklin, Mary Toler, and Marcia Weaver (mother of Sarah Lovett), as well as married women such as Lavinia Lovett

and Maggie Smith Brunswick. Their homes were described as generally "comfortable, several really beautiful, with some of the most nicely kept yards in town."[20]

In 1889 Nathan Brackett took another step to increase potential financing options for locals. He established the first of four Harpers Ferry and Bolivar Building Associations, designed to finance homes in an era when bank loans were generally available only to the wealthy. Members subscribed to this mutual aid organization and made monthly payments for one or more shares of the association. Then they could take out a mortgage for constructing or purchasing a home.[21]

When the Bank of Harpers Ferry was established in 1893, Brackett was a trustee, later replaced by his brother-in-law, Scott Lightner, and then his sister, Lura Lightner. Brackett's son-in-law, John Newcomer, worked for the bank after the turn of the century alongside Scott Lightner. One notable result of this Brackett family influence was a friendlier stance toward loaning money to Black residents.[22] At least one Black man, Storer teacher Henry Hunter Winters, later became a stockholder in the Bank of Harpers Ferry.

These connections worked to limit barriers that infamously discouraged Black property ownership elsewhere across the South. Social equality remained a distant goal, but these institutions enabled industrious Black families to enjoy the fruits of their labor to a greater degree.

Since completing her education at Storer, Louisa Jackson taught in Black schools for a few years, then married Lucas D. Dennis in November 1875. Before the war, Lucas had been enslaved by

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20 *Storer Record*, Winter 1892, p. 2

21 Additional options were available to Black property owners in need of financing; for example, the Jefferson County Provident Building Association (Deed of Trust, First Zion Baptist Church to James M. Mason Jr., Trustee, September 25, 1899, Jefferson County Deed Book 87 page 539)

22 For example, the Bank of Harpers Ferry loaned Thomas and Lavinia Lovett $1,200 to buy the house formerly owned by Joseph Barry on East Ridge Street.

the Dandridges at The Bower in Leetown, Jefferson County.[23] The Dennises' first son, William Howard, was born in 1876. The 1880 census shows them living in Bolivar with the addition of two daughters. In October 1888, the couple bought property from the same source as so many of their neighbors. A deed from Storer College conveyed to Lucas Dennis a large, three-lot parcel just to the west of campus along Fillmore Street on the corner with what is today known as Zachary Taylor Street. The school acknowledged payment in full of $225. Lucas had likely been making payments over time, as he had already begun excavating for a new house by August 1.[24]

The Dennises continued living on Ridge Street as late as 1900, although they kept cows on their Fillmore Street property in the meantime.[25] Their home construction on Fillmore must have dragged on for several years, possibly delayed by limited financial resources. Lucas and Louisa signed a deed of trust in February 1894 to secure a note to the Harpers Ferry-Bolivar Building Association No. 1 for $100 payable in six months. In July 1895, they turned to Mutual German Savings & Loan Association of Wheeling for a loan of $400, due in eight years (but paid off in five).[26] They must have continued to struggle financially for many years after moving in, as their names showed up on delinquent tax lists repeatedly until the 1920s, but somehow they always came through with the payment and held onto their home.[27]

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23 Walter Dean Myers, *Bad Boy: A Memoir* (HarperCollins), 2020 Reprint. As late as 1870, he was employed at The Bower as a farm laborer, per 1870 Census, Averill Township, Jefferson County, WV, p. 29

24 *Virginia Free Press*, August 2, 1888, "From the Harpers Ferry Sentinel," p. 3, col. 3.

25 *Harpers Ferry Sentinel*, April 27, 1895, p. 2.

26 Deed, President and Trustees of Storer College to Lucas Dennis, dated October 15, 1888, Jefferson County Deed Book S page 347; Deed of Trust from Lucas and Louisa Dennis to Forest W. Brown, Trustee, dated February 8, 1894, Jefferson County Deed Book 76 page 126; Deed of Trust from Lucas and Louisa Dennis to Wheeling Title & Trust, dated July 20, 1895; Deed From Louisa C. Dennis and L. D. Dennis to William Howard Dennis, dated August 24, 1905, references deed to property being granted in March 1900 (Jefferson County Deed Book 96 page 247).

27 For example, see *Spirit of Jefferson*, June 9, 1903, November 14, 1905, August 23, 1910, June 18, 1918; *Farmers Advocate*, June 25, 1908, July 28, 1917; *Virginia Free Press*, Au-

Politics



Lucas and Louisa Dennis home on the corner of Fillmore and Zachary Taylor Streets.
(Corporation of Harpers Ferry, Historic Landmarks Commission archives)

Beckman surmised in his 2004 article that part of Brackett's long-term motivation in facilitating Black land ownership "may have been to expedite the speed of political enfranchisement and social assimilation of the black community through property and homeownership, as may be deduced from relatively strong voter registration"[28]. Brackett was certainly a politically active Republican. He ran for the West Virginia legislature in 1870 and was endorsed by local Blacks but was defeated. The county had a significant number of Black voters, and for many years most were reliably Republican.[29]

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gust 19, 1915.

28 Beckman, 2004, p.84

29 Engle, Stephen D., "Mountaineer Reconstruction: Blacks in the Political Reconstruction of West Virginia," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Summer, 1993): pp. 137-165. (p 152)

By the mid-1880s, Jefferson County Democrats had begun trying to attract Black votes to gain a majority—or at least divide Republicans.[30] One strategy to reach Harpers Ferry Black voters was to address the lack of a Black grade school in the community. Democrats C. B. Wentzell and Richard Henderson were elected to the Harpers Ferry school board that year,[31] and in October the *Harpers Ferry Sentinel* endorsed a petition requesting the board to furnish a school and teacher for the 42 Black children still denied a public education. By May 1888, a new two-room school building had been constructed on West Ridge Street, where Louisa's children could attend along with their neighbors.[32] This same school board authorized the sale of the Seminary Lot to Thomas and Lavinia Lovett in 1887, where they later constructed the Hill Top House. By 1892, 16 Black men in Harpers Ferry were noted as voting the Democratic ticket.[33]

This move by the county Democrats may have precipitated the formation of a Republican Club in Harpers Ferry in winter 1888 as a counteractive measure. Former school superintendent Joseph Barry was elected president with Thomas S. Lovett as secretary. Brackett was elected as a delegate to the state Republican convention that year, along with Storer teacher William H. Bell. James H. Robinson was named as an alternate.[34]

Social Institutions

Black church buildings finally began sprouting up during this era, as well. In 1879 the Methodist Episcopal Church bought a lot on West Ridge Street for $50, and they constructed a foundation right away. Not until 1881 did they contract White builder J. W. Butt to complete the church building.[35] During construction, they bought

30 *Martinsburg Herald*, October 15, 1887, p.3

31 *Spirit of Jefferson*, May 24, 1887

32 *Spirit of Jefferson*, March 20, 1888; The school was referred to as being in Bolivar, although it was well within the Harpers Ferry town boundary.

33 *Wheeling Register*, November 21, 1892, p. 5

34 *Shepherdstown Register*, February 10, 1888

35 The foundation cornerstone bears the inscription, "M. E. Church 1879." *Virginia Free*

two more lots from the U.S. government for $24, one beside and one behind the building On the adjacent lot east of the church, they later built a parsonage for their minister.[36] To help pay construction debts, church trustees posted their Fillmore Street lot for sale in 1880, and Storer College purchased it for $100.

The trustees of First Zion Baptist Church bought the next lot to the east of the Methodist Episcopal parsonage from attorney James D. Butts in 1892.[37] The church's first pastor was hired in 1896. The growing congregation met in the nearby schoolhouse while they awaited completion of their building. According to a deed of trust in 1899, they were still in the process of building, and the record is unclear exactly when they moved in.[38] Later, the First Zion Church basement housed an overflow of students from the public school and was referred to as the third-room school.

The Harpers Ferry Freewill Baptist Church was founded by Nathan Brackett and his missionary helpers when they arrived at war's end. Members were initially proselytized from among the refugees there, and the church met for many years in buildings on the Storer campus. In the late 1880s, Storer leaders decided a separate house of worship would be more effective for attracting community members.[39] Initial construction costs were donated from the denomination's general conference, and a foundation was laid in 1889 on the corner of Fillmore Street and what was then Jackson Street. Storer deeded the property to the church in 1890. Construction was not completed until several large donations came in from northern patrons—including a bequest from the estate of Rev. Silas Curtis for whom

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Press, March 5, 1881, p. 3; *Spirit of Jefferson*, March 29, 1881, p. 3

36 Lewis, p. 48

37 Jefferson County Deed Book Z page 426, dated April 29, 1892.

38 In this deed of trust dated September 25, 1899, the First Zion Baptist Church trustees redeemed eight shares of capital stock in the Jefferson County Provident Building Association for the sum $2,016.

39 Throughout the 1880s, Black members of Free Will Baptist churches in Shepherdstown and Kearneysville complained about White control of their congregations. See *Virginia Free Press*, July 26, 1883, August 2, 1883, September 20, 1883, and *Spirit of Jefferson*, July 22, 1884, February 2, 1886

the church was named. Church records show stonemason Dennis Lucas receiving payments for his work on the new building.[40] Curtis Freewill Baptist Church, often referred to as the "college church," was dedicated in 1896. The names of Louisa and Lucas and their son Howard appear on the church rolls that year, followed later by Carrie, Bernard, and Carroll.[41] The church's services were attended mostly by Storer's Black faculty, students, and alumni who settled locally.

Churches were important social institutions in the Black community, but residents also established chapters of fraternal organizations, including the Black Masons[42] and, later, the True Reformers (John Brown Fountain 1830). Harpers Ferry also had its own 16-piece Black brass band.[43]

By 1880, the state had reverted Harpers Ferry and Bolivar to their original separate town boundaries. The census reported 134 Black residents, about 17% of the Harpers Ferry population. In 1890, the Black population had grown to 232 (24%).[44]

A NEW CENTURY

At the turn of the century, the total Black population was slightly lower at 210. The 1900 census showed 33 Black residents labeled as "servants" living in someone else's home, many around the Storer campus, including the Lockwood House, and at the Hotel Conner in the Lower Town. Black women who were employed were mostly engaged in domestic jobs, such as laundry, housekeeping, and cooking.

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40 *Acct. of Money Recd. and Paid on the Building of Harpers Ferry F. B. Church, by E. W. Porter, 1894*. From the Storer College Collection, West Virginia University, West Virginia & Regional History Center, A&M 2621 Box 30 Folder 3.

41 Curtis Freewill Baptist Church ledger, Harpers Ferry, W.Va., Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Museum Collection, Accession No. HAFE-01400

42 *Martinsburg Independent*, August 26, 1882, p. 5

43 *South Branch Intelligencer* (Romney, WV), December 2, 1892, p. 1

44 *Virginia Free Press*, May 25, 1891.

By this time, Black families had concentrated in two areas of town, neither of which were exclusively Black. Six separate homes on Fillmore Street, near Storer and the college church, were occupied by a Black "head" (in census parlance), half of which were Black owned. Another five homes on South Cliff Street next to Storer were Black owned and occupied. Most of the Black residents living on Fillmore and Cliff streets were connected with Storer as faculty, staff, or alumni.

On West Ridge Street, near the graded school and two additional Black churches, were ten homes occupied by a Black head, seven of which were Black owned. Many of these residents worked low-wage, blue-collar jobs, although some were church pastors and public school teachers.

At least four homes on the 900 block of Washington Street were Black owned in the early 20th century. They sat across the street from the Eackles Funeral Home, which coincidentally, was perhaps the most integrated business in town. Throughout the 20th century, the remains of many deceased Black residents were prepared there for burial. The Dailey Funeral Home, which moved to Fillmore Street from Lower Town after the 1924 flood handled only a few Black funerals, notably those of Thomas Lovett and his sister Maggie Daniel.

In 1892, Storer itself had wondered "whether any town in the south can make a better showing" of Black real estate ownership. Its numbers encompassed a one-mile radius around campus and may have included some technically in Bolivar, but it claimed that "two thirds of the colored people of Harper's Ferry own their own homes, while … three fourths are owners of real estate."[45]

Henry T. McDonald became the Storer president of the new century, replacing Brackett. Either the school no longer had the capacity to deal in real estate or McDonald took less interest in facilitating

45 *Storer Record*, Winter 1892, p. 2

home ownership. Yet, the symbiosis between the Black community and Storer College was cemented. Faculty and students supported the two Black churches on West Ridge Street with Sunday School teachers and occasional pulpit speakers. Black children throughout the community experienced the entire length of Fillmore Street around Storer as a safe place to visit and play. Storer also became a social hub for Black youth, whether they attended there or not. Many Storer graduates, including three of Louisa's sons and one son-in-law, taught in local schools. Grandview School was built on Putnam Street in the 1930s to replace the two-room schoolhouse.[46]



Louisa Jackson Dennis (*Storer College Builder* May 1953. p.4)

Black residents like the Dennises, in turn, sent their children to Storer for a high school education, as it was their only option until the county opened Page-Jackson High School in 1938. Five of six

46 Once the original two-room school was vacated, Louisa's son Bernard purchased it and converted it to a residence. It is still owned by one of his descendants.

adult Dennis children remained in Harpers Ferry most of their lives, with three buying properties on Fillmore Street within a block of their parents. In the 1920s Storer was finally accredited as a junior college, and several of Louisa's grandchildren attended in the 1930s and 40s. Louisa, Howard, and Bernard were especially active in the college church. Louisa and Lucas also boarded Storer teachers and students in their home.[47]

Lucas lived to age 100, dying in 1941. Louisa made it to age 99, living on as family matriarch until 1954. A year earlier, the *Storer Builder* reported that she was "active and has a wonderful memory." Her obituary noted that at the time of her death she was one of the oldest living alumni of Storer, and she enjoyed a "large circle of friends among both white and colored residents."

When the John Wesley Methodist trustees bought their first lot on Fillmore Street in 1869, they had the foresight to purchase an additional parcel on the north side of Old Furnace Road near the western edge of Harpers Ferry. This land would become the nucleus of Cedar Hill Cemetery, where many Black residents of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar have been laid to rest ever since. Louisa and Lucas are buried there, alongside most of their children.

Storer College closed in 1955, Grandview School was finally integrated in 1965, and a number of local employers left the county in the late 20th century. Harpers Ferry became a much less-desirable location for Black families, and the racial demographics have shifted dramatically ever since. One cannot walk among those many headstones at Cedar Hill, though, without realizing there must be many more stories to tell and a rich heritage yet to be uncovered.

47 *Storer Builder*, 1953, from the Storer College archives of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Lynn Pechuekonis is a West Virginia native living in historic Harpers Ferry. Since 2022, she has published two biographies of significant local African Americans, Man of Sterling Worth: Professor William A. Saunders of Storer College *and* Among the Mountains: The Lovetts and Their Hill Top House. *Both are published by the Harpers Ferry Park Association.*

SHANNONDALE

Condensed from an address given before the Society
by Thornton T. Perry, Jr., August 9, 1940

"Shannondale," now no more than a neglected spring or two and one ruin and slight traces of others in a pleasant meadow on the Shenandoah river in Kabletown district, was once a nationwide and even world famous watering place, with a large hotel, many cottages and recreation buildings, and drawing each summer guests from near and far, many of them notables of the day.

Early in the 1700's it comprised a total of 29,000 acres and extended from what is now Castleman's Ferry in Clarke county to a point east of Harpers Ferry and from the "Short Hills" of Loudoun county to the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers. Earliest records give one John Colvil as owner of the great tract of mountain and valley land. Later, in 1780, it became the property of Ferdinand Fairfax, who resided in Jefferson county. He sold it to William Page for the sum of $56,542. The portion of the original tract containing what is known as "Shannondale" was described in the records of those times as the "Horseshoe Farm," due to the almost perfect horseshoe described by the Shenandoah in sweeping around it.

The earliest available record in which the medicinal value of the Shannondale springs is described is a report from one Dr. DeButts in 1821. This contained an analysis of the water and a description of the unusual curative powers ascribed to it. A full page in a Jefferson county paper about that time is devoted to a most enthusiastic account of the properties contained by the waters. Almost every ailment then known to man is listed in that account, and assurance is given that all may be quickly cured at the springs.

It was at that time that improvements were made at the place. Accounts of the time speak of a large boarding house and two low one-story brick buildings. The fame of the magical waters spread, and each year brought an increase in patronage to the place. In 1828 a

company was formed for the purpose of promoting the place, and the facilities of "Shannondale" were greatly improved. A big four-story hotel was built on a rise above the springs and overlooking the river. It contained a great ballroom, large bar and other appurtenances. In addition to the hotel there were ten or twelve cottages and smaller buildings built at the place. "Tygart's Hall," gambling casino, soon opened its doors on the site directly behind the hotel and catered to the sporting instinct of the male guests. There was a large bowling green there; stables were filled with fine horses and bridle paths led for miles through the mountains.

The venture prospered, and in the next few years "Shannondale" reached its zenith in fame and popularity. Statesmen, visiting diplomats, doctors and other celebrities were counted each season among the guests who flocked there. Presidents who are known to have visited "Shannondale" are Monroe, Pierce, Polk, Fillmore and Van Buren. So widely did the waters of the springs become advertised that mail stilt arrives in Charles Town, addressed to some Shannondale official and containing invitations to spa meetings in Germany, Switzerland, Czecho-Slovakia, and other countries of Europe.

In 1859 the fine hotel at "Shannondale" was destroyed by fire. The blaze occurred in the winter, and nothing definite is known of its origin. Apparently discouraged by this loss, the company decided not to rebuild and dissolved itself. The cottages and other buildings remained, and the place was still operated each summer, with another smaller hotel built later, but the place never regained its full glory.

"Shannondale" was reached in those days by stage from Charles Town and Harpers Ferry. An advertisement from a newspaper of nearly a century ago tells of the excellent connection made by stage coaches from "Shannondale" with the railroad at Harpers Ferry. Later similar connection was maintained with the Charles Town station. At one time, when a railroad to be known as the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire R. R. was projected, "Shannondale" was

listed as one of its stops. The railroad, which was never built, was to have crossed the Blue Ridge from Loudoun county and proceeded on to Winchester by way of Castleman's Ferry. Although there were roads leading from "Shannondale" back into Loudoun county over the mountains, most of the guests arrived from the west side of the Shenandoah and used the river ferryboat directly in front of the "Shannondale" grounds. The ferry, hand operated as all river ferries, was in use until comparatively recently.

After "Shannondale" faded, it was still a favorite spot for the holding of celebrations and picnics, and many Charles Town and Jefferson county families in the latter part of the last century were in the habit of going there to stay each summer, using one of the cottages still standing or camping in tents. Usually a Fourth of July celebration was held at the place, with the Charles Town Artillery Corps lending the military setting. A newspaper of the day gives an account of one celebration in which the "Shannondale Band" took part.

Gradually the once famous place declined. Fire in 1909 destroyed some of the buildings; others decayed and were not repaired. By a time soon after the turn of the present century travel to "Shannondale" had practically ceased and only an occasional small picnicking group visited the scene of much former life and excitement. The land was farmed and stock quartered in what remained of the buildings. The last of the old brick cottages was burned and fell in almost a quarter century ago. Thornton T. Perry, Sr., the present owner of the tract, has built a good road into it from the county road running back to the Mountain Mission, and has enclosed it with a fence, but the place is used today only for farming and cattle grazing.

In 1839 an iron furnace was established on a stream of water still called Furnace Run, near the river, and a short distance down the latter from Shannondale Springs. The furnace was in operation until the time of the War of the 1860's and brought unheard of activity and prosperity to that section of the mountain. A newspaper account of 1840 gives a glowing description of the venture. Fifty or more

men were employed by the furnace company, Purdue, Nichols and Co., either in operating the plant itself or in digging and hauling ore and cutting timber and burning charcoal. The ore was obtained from the mountainsides all around the furnace, and outcroppings were scooped down to shallow excavations and caves. Hauled to the furnace with teams, it was loaded and smelted with charcoal obtained from timber cut on the mountain.

Old persons still living in that section have told of remembering when all that part of the mountain was denuded of trees through the activity of the charcoal burners. Two hundred bushels of charcoal were needed to smelt each ton of iron, and the furnace had a capacity of about three tons per day. The water on Furnace Run was used to operate the fanning machine which gave forced draft to the furnace.

Iron from the furnace was next formed into large "pigs" about a yard long and almost as heavy as a man could lift. They were hauled overland to Alexandria by team, and the returning wagons brought provisions and supplies of all kinds. Some of the iron found its way to the city by the way of the Shenandoah river to Washington, and some was boated to Harpers Ferry and loaded aboard trains there.

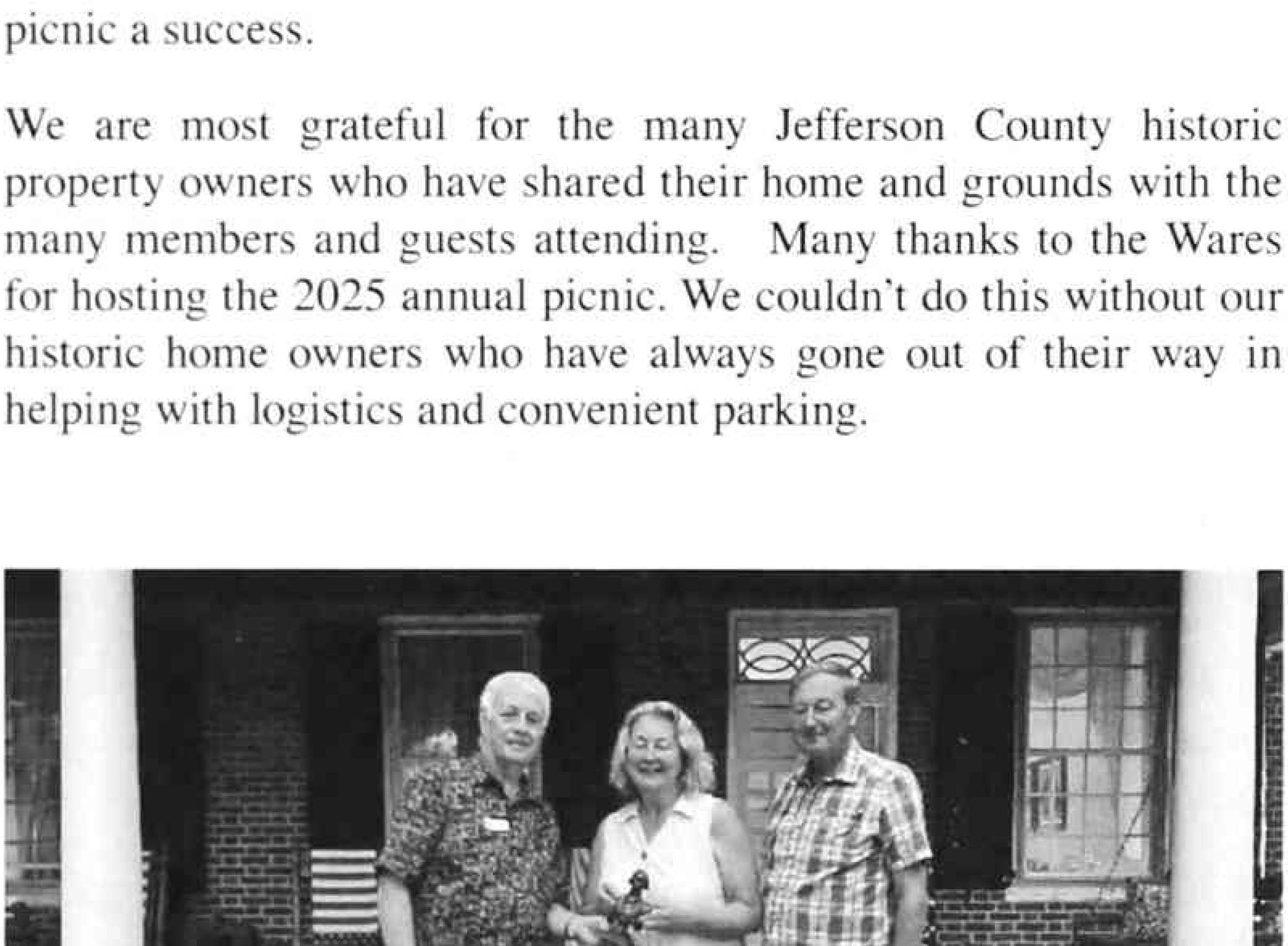
With so many families engaged in work quite a community sprang up, with a general store and other facilities. The furnace would, no doubt, have died a natural death about that time, as richer ore fields and cheaper mining and smelting operations were being discovered in the West, but it was the War between the States which rang down the curtain. Stripped of man power by enlistments, the furnace was doing only irregular work, and the community was raided a number of times by both forces. The main furnace was finally burned, the story being that it was destroyed by a group of Yankees who believed some Confederates were in hiding there. The furnace was never rebuilt, although the massive old furnace chimney is standing to this day. Gradually the houses and other buildings which had been built around it and in the mountains at a near distance were destroyed by fire or decay, and only an occasional ruined chimney or pile of foundation stones now marks their former location.

Annual Picnic 2025

The Jefferson County Historical Society's annual summer picnic was held on Wednesday, August 6, 2025, at Historic Caledonia Farm, located just west of Charles Town. Heidi and Joe Ware were our host and had prepared their grounds and restored barn to welcome the attending members and guests.

This year Margarita Edmonson was our caterer, providing her homemade barbeque plus preparing an assortment of summer beverages. Bobbi Roper was there (she said this is one of her favorite events) always helping to make sure all goes smoothly. Thanks to all the board members who came early and to all who helped make the picnic a success.

We are most grateful for the many Jefferson County historic property owners who have shared their home and grounds with the many members and guests attending. Many thanks to the Wares for hosting the 2025 annual picnic. We couldn't do this without our historic home owners who have always gone out of their way in helping with logistics and convenient parking.



History of Caledonia

The Wares are only the fifth family to own this historic property. The land itself was an early patent from Lord Fairfax in the early 1700s, but the house itself was started in 1795 as a four-room brick structure, which is now the rear wing. The next owner, William Cameron, Sr., completed the present main house in 1816.

Cameron had moved to Jefferson County from Pennsylvania and many of the features of the house bear the Pennsylvania influence. Unlike local convention of the time, the house faces due west into the weather but a full-length porch aids in shelter from the elements. Most of the interior walls are also of brick construction, making them thicker than usual in houses of this period.

Another unusual element is the entry hall, which is on the side instead of centrally located; its handsome staircase is pushed to the very back of the hall. In part because Caledonia had so few owners, many original elements still exist throughout the house, such as decorative moldings and heart-pine flooring. On the main floor many of the 12-over-12 windows still have their original glass.

The Wares have completed extensive renovations, including installing a modern kitchen. In 2005, they added a 2-story addition using native limestone from buildings of the same era, installing 200-year old heart-pine flooring and moldings milled to match the original moldings.

A large bluestone patio with pergola and a sunken garden with water feature provide enticing spots to enjoy the wonderful view of a 2-acre spring-fed lake–a popular spot for migrating water fowl.

Of historic interest is a Civil War battle which took place on the property. In the 1830s, the Winchester and Potomac Railroad ran through Caledonia's grounds, and a depot was constructed near the end of the property. In August of 1864, Confederate forces under Jubal Early and Federal forces under Philip Sheridan met here in the Battle of Cameron's Depot. The foundations of the depot are still visible.

Picnic Chair, Barbara Gibson
Caledonia history furnished by the Wares.


CALEDONIA