

WI-487  
Parsonsburg  
Salisbury vicinity  
Public and private

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

The earliest history of Parsonsburg is somewhat clouded, but a crossroads community formed in this location during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. On the 1866 Martenet Map of Worcester County, there is a distinct, but unnamed intersection which is defined by a “M. E. Church” as well as blacksmith and wheelwright shops. The M. E. Church was the Jerusalem congregation, which according to its history, was established in 1839. (See WI-488) Aside from the church, blacksmith shop, and wheelwright shop, it is unclear how many people resided at the crossroads during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Soon after the publication of Simon Martenet’s map, however, the character and nature of western Worcester County was about to change. One year later the western portion of Worcester along with the northern precincts of Somerset County were joined to create Wicomico County, and two years later, in 1868, a transpeninsular railroad was completed between Salisbury and Berlin. Known as the Wicomico & Pocomoke Railroad, the line was built just north of Jerusalem Church on its path to neighboring Derrickson’s Crossroads. (See WI-489)

Four years after the completion of the Wicomico & Pocomoke Railroad, a short article was printed in the *Salisbury Advertiser* that provided a brief profile of the crossroads that had been newly renamed Parsonsburg:

*Parsonsburg—The little hamlet bearing the above name is about eight miles from Salisbury, on the W. & P. Railroad. It was formerly known as Parsons’ Switch, but*

*the citizens christened it Parsonsburg in their petition to the Postmaster General for a post office, and will henceforth be known by that name. The Postmaster General has appointed Mr. Isaac H. Parsons, well-known as the agent of Smith & Williams, to act as Postmaster. Parsonsburg now has 61 inhabitants, two saw mills, one grist mill, two stores, the proverbial blacksmith and wheelwright shop, and one M. E. Church. All this progress has been made since the railroad was laid, and it bids fair to become a considerable little village.*

*The lumber trade is already considerable—one firm in Salisbury alone bought two million feet of lumber there last year, and they expect their purchases will reach three million feet this year.*

By testimony of the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas, published in 1877, the village had grown distinctly since the 1866 Martenet map printing. Just north of the railroad, a grid of streets were platted with houses located on generously sized lots. Along the path of the railroad right-of-way was located the steam saw and planing mill owned by Parsons, Laws, and Company. Scattered throughout the crossroads community were approximately twenty dwellings.

During the course of the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century Parsonsburg did not exceed much beyond its boundaries reflected on the 1877 atlas. New houses erected during the relatively prosperous period between 1880 and 1929 largely replaced the structures erected during the previous generation. Many dwellings lined the east/west road that traversed the length of the village. With the rise in ownership of the automobile and enhanced mobility of community residents, the commercial vitality of many Parsonsburg businesses languished as the population no longer continued to increase.

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. WI-487

## 1. Name of Property

(indicate preferred name)

historic

Parsonsborg

other

Parsonsborg Survey District

## 2. Location

street and number

not for publication

city, town

vicinity

county

## 3. Owner of Property

(give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

Various owners

street and number

telephone

city, town

Parsonsborg

state

MD

zip code

21849

## 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court

tax map and parcel Map, P.

city, town

Salisbury, Maryland

liber

folio

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

Contributing Resource in National Register District

**Contributing Resource in Local Historic District**

Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register

Recorded by HABS/HAER

Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT

Other:

## 6. Classification

### Category

district  
building(s)  
structure  
site  
object

### Ownership

public  
private  
 both

### Current Function

agriculture  
 commerce/trade  
defense  
 domestic  
education  
funerary  
government  
health care  
industry

landscape  
recreation/culture  
 religion  
social  
transportation  
work in progress  
unknown  
vacant/not in use  
other:

### Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>60</u>	buildings
	sites
	structures
<u>1</u>	objects
<u>61</u>	Total

Number of Contributing Resources  
previously listed in the Inventory

Name Parsonsburg Survey District  
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

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## 7. Description

### Condition

	excellent	deteriorated
<u>x</u>	good	ruins
	fair	altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The village of Parsonsburg is located along MD 346 (Old Ocean City Road) approximately five (5) miles east of the City of Salisbury in Wicomico County, Maryland. The main road access is provided by way of Old Ocean City Road from the east and west and the Parsonsburg-Melson Road from the north and south.

The historic structures that define the village of Parsonsburg principally date to the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Approximately sixty (60) standing structures line the primary roads and a few side streets of the village. Principal among the historic properties is the Jerusalem Methodist Church (WI-488), the oldest dated structure in the village. Built in 1875, the Jerusalem Methodist Church is a single-story bracketed frame structure that stands on the southeast corner of the principal crossroads intersection. While the church dates to 1875, the accompanying cemetery has markers that span the history of the congregation, which was established in 1839. The cemetery is distinguished by several decorative iron fences. Standing east of the church is Holloway's Store (WI-489), a two-story, gable-front frame commercial block erected during the late years of the nineteenth century.

The majority of the structures in Parsonsburg, however, are modest two-story or single-story frame dwellings with side hall/parlor or center hall/single-pile plans. Resting on low brick foundations, the houses are generally covered with asbestos shingles or later vinyl siding, and the medium to steeply pitched roofs are covered with asphalt shingles. Most of the houses have been reworked with replacement sash, although some houses retain two-over-two windows. There is a number of structures, principally houses, that date to the first half of the twentieth century and follow modest sized examples of four-square and bungalow forms. In many instances the main block is extended to the rear by a modest single story or two-story service wing.

Name Parsonsburg Survey District

**Continuation Sheet**Number 8 Page 1**8. Significance**

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
1600-1699	agriculture	economics	health/medicine	performing arts
1700-1799	archeology	education	industry	philosophy
<u>x</u> 1800-1899	<u>x</u> architecture	engineering	invention	politics/government
<u>x</u> 1900-1999	art	entertainment/ recreation	landscape architecture	religion
2000-	commerce	ethnic heritage	law	science
	communications	exploration/ settlement	literature	social history
	community planning		maritime history	transportation
	conservation		military	other:

**Significance dates****Architect****Specific dates****Builder**

Evaluation for:

National Register

   Maryland Register  x not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The earliest history of Parsonsburg is somewhat clouded, but a crossroads formed in this location during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. On the 1866 Martenet Map of Worcester County, there is a distinct, but unnamed intersection which is defined by an "M. E. Church" Church as well as blacksmith and wheelwright shops.<sup>1</sup> The M. E. Church was the Jerusalem congregation, which according to its history, was established in 1839. (See WI-488) Aside from the church and blacksmith and wheelwright shops, it is unclear how many people resided at the crossroads.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon J. Martenet, "Map of Worcester County," 1866 (Maryland State Archives)

Name Parsonsburg Survey District

**Continuation Sheet**Number 8 Page 2

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*Parsonsburg—The little hamlet bearing the above name is about eight miles from Salisbury, on the W. & P. Railroad. It was formerly known as Parsons' Switch, but the citizens christened it Parsonsburg in their petition to Postmaster General for a post office, and will henceforth be known by that name. The Postmaster General has appointed Mr. Isaac H. Parsons, well-known as the agent of Smith & Williams, to act as Postmaster. Parsonsburg now has 61 inhabitants, two saw mills, one grist mill, two stores, the proverbial blacksmith and wheelwright shop, and one M. E. Church. All this progress has been made since the railroad was laid, and it bids fair to become a considerable little village.*

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By testimony of the Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas, published in 1877, the village had grown distinctly since the 1866 Martenet map.<sup>3</sup> Just north of the railroad, a grid of streets were platted with houses located on generously sized lots. Along the path of the railroad right-of-way was located the steam saw and planing mill owned by Parsons, Laws and Company. Scattered throughout the crossroads community were approximately twenty dwellings. During the course of the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century Parsonsburg did not exceed much beyond its boundaries reflected on the 1877 atlas. New houses erected during the relatively prosperous period between 1880 and 1929 largely replaced the structures erected during the earlier years of the village's history. With the rise in ownership of the automobile and enhanced mobility of community residents, the commercial vitality of many Parsonsburg businesses languished as the population no longer continued to expand.

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<sup>2</sup> *Salisbury Advertiser*, 9 March 1872.

<sup>3</sup> John L. Graham, ed. *The 1877 Atlases and Other Early Maps of the Eastern Shore of Maryland*, Wicomico County Bicentennial Committee, pp. 13 and 15.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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WI-487

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of project area

Acreage surveyed approximately 75 acres

Quadrangle name Pittsville, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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**Verbal boundary description and justification**

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Private Consultant

street & number P. O. Box 5

date 4/12/00

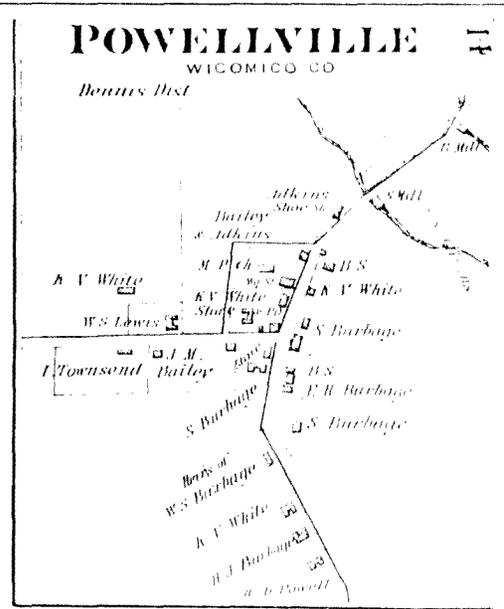
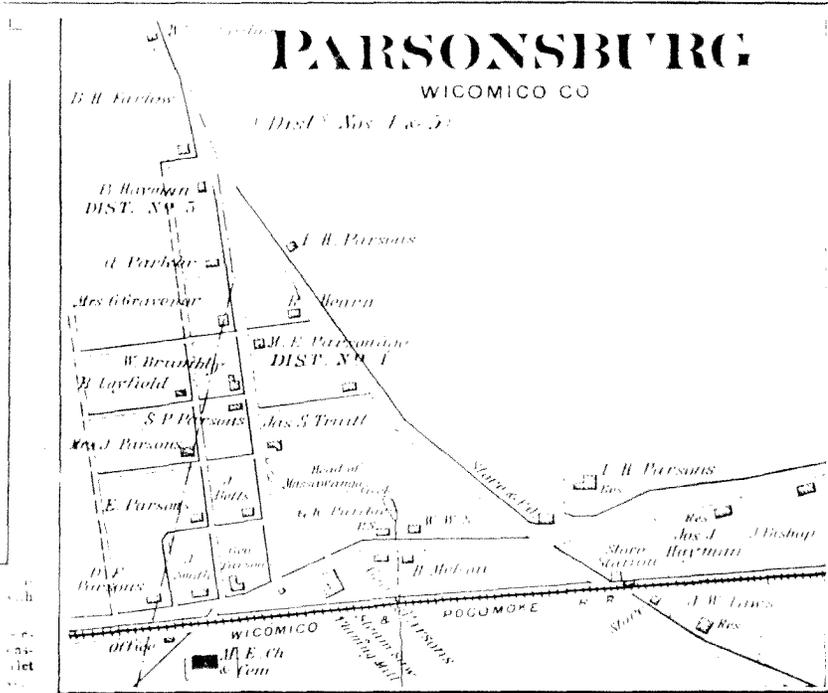
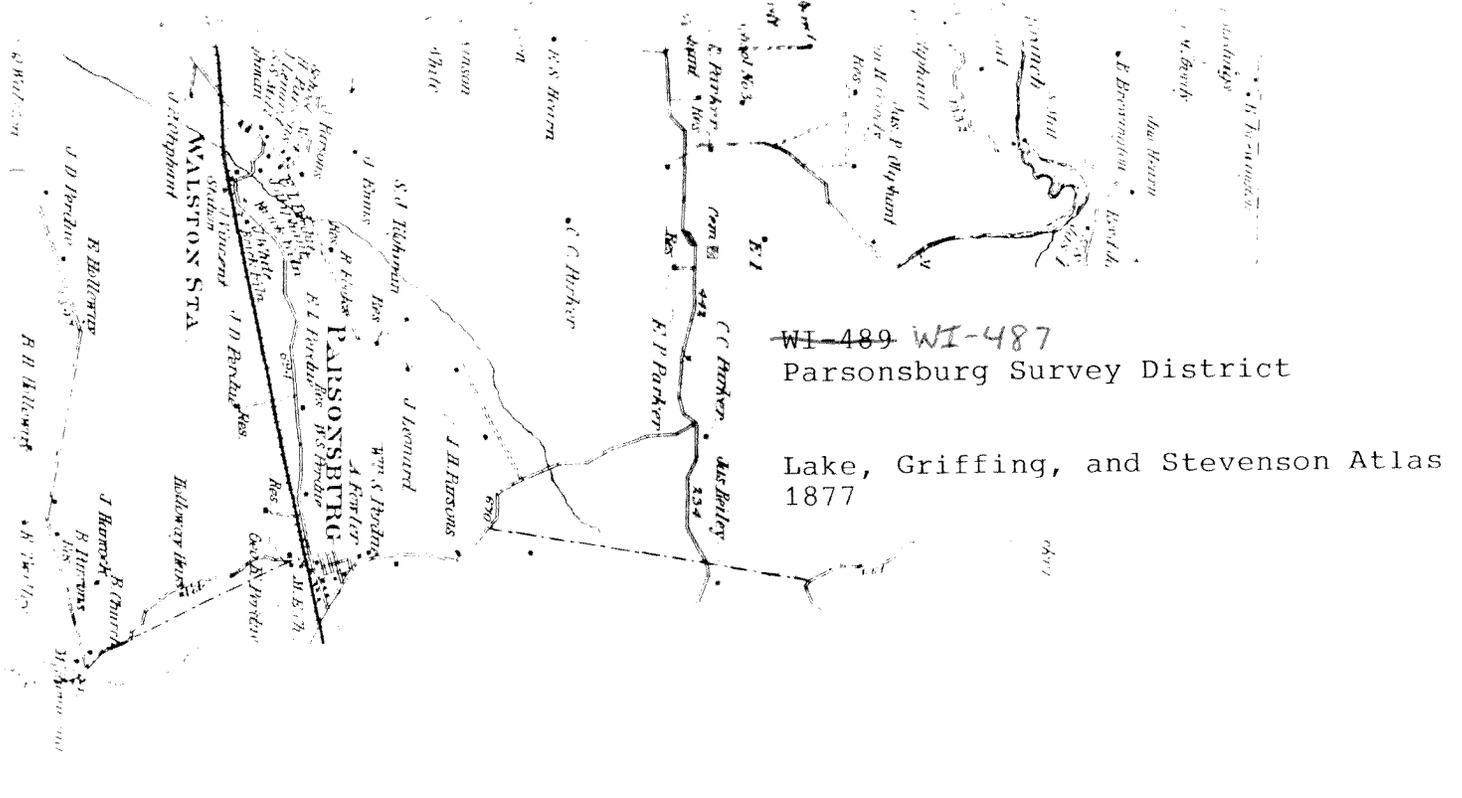
city or town Westover, Maryland 21871

phone 410-651-1094

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: **Maryland Historical Trust**  
**DHCD/DHCP**  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032  
410-514-7600

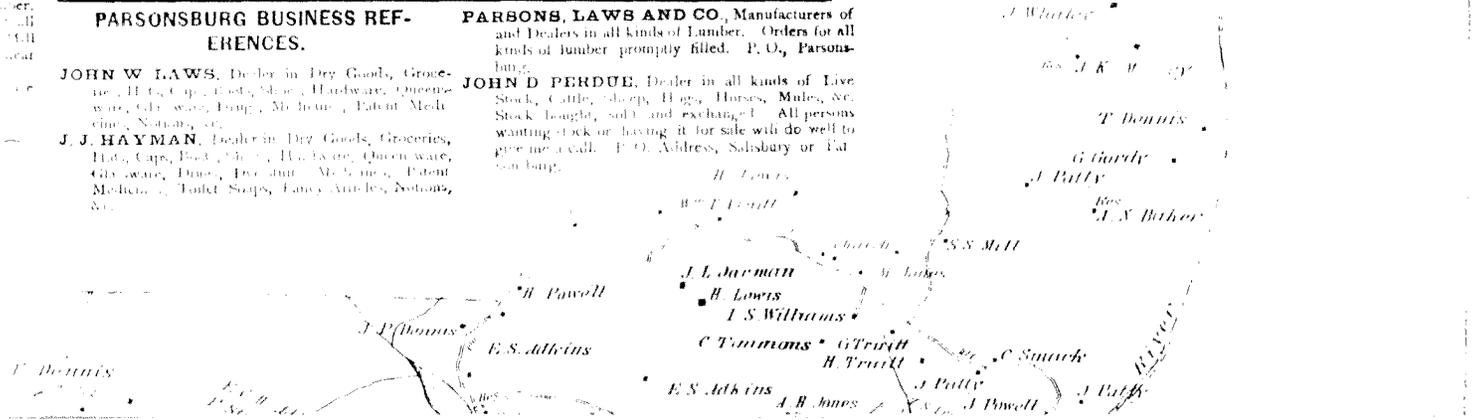


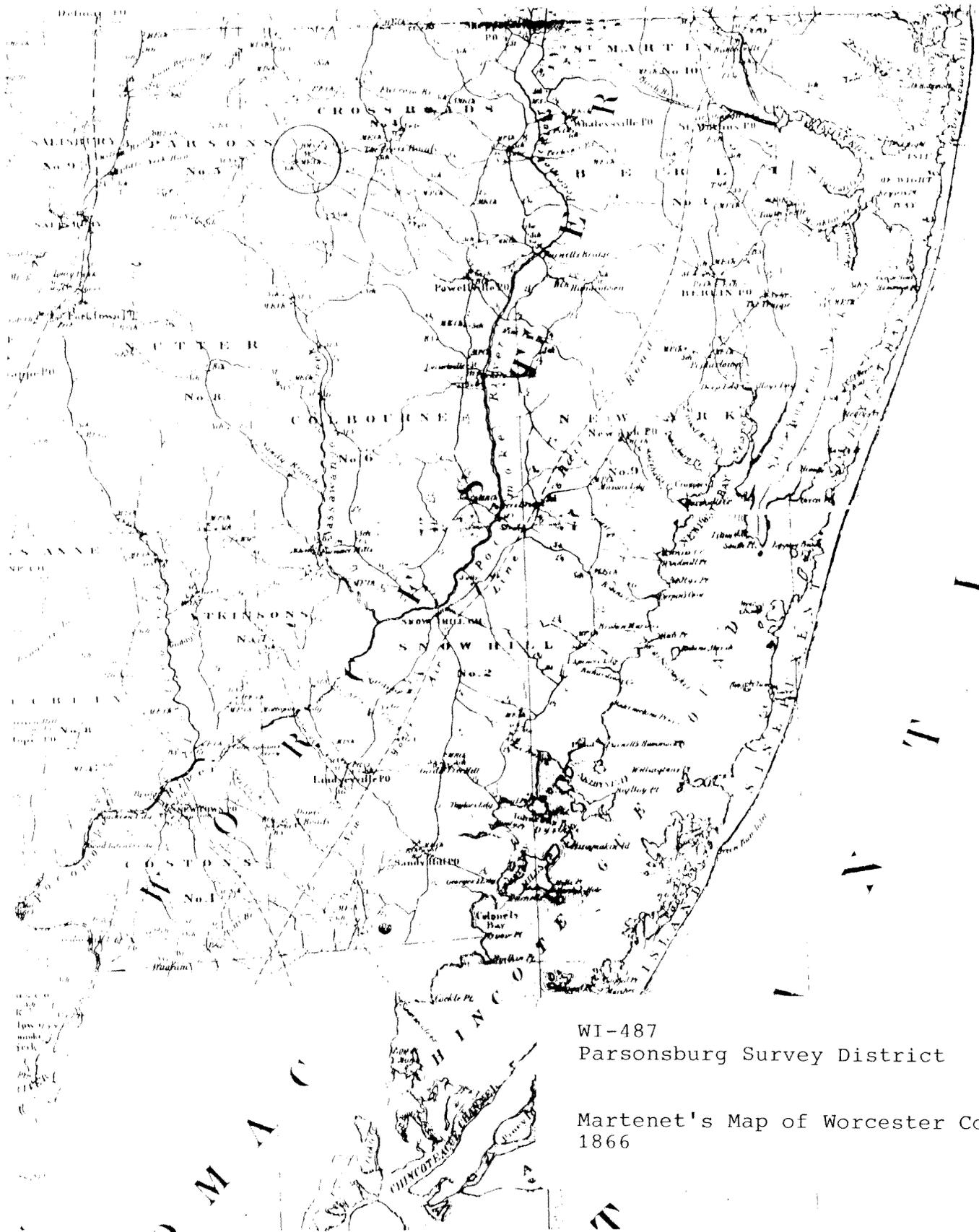
**PARSONSBURG BUSINESS REFERENCES.**

- JOHN W. LAWS.** Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Hardware, Queensware, Oil, Wares, Trunks, Mirrors, Patent Medicines, Notions, etc.
- J. J. HAYMAN.** Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Hardware, Queensware, Oil, Wares, Trunks, Mirrors, Patent Medicines, Toilet Soaps, Fancy Articles, Notions, etc.

**PARSONS, LAWS AND CO.** Manufacturers of and Dealers in all kinds of Lumber. Orders for all kinds of lumber promptly filled. P. O., Parsonsburg.

**JOHN D. PERDUE.** Dealer in all kinds of Live Stock, Cattle, Sheep, Hogs, Horses, Mules, etc. Stock bought, sold, and exchanged. All persons wanting stock or having it for sale will do well to give me a call. P. O. Address, Salisbury or Fairbairn.





WI-487  
Parsonsborg Survey District

Martenet's Map of Worcester County  
1866

Simon J. Martenet, "Map of Worcester County," 1866 (Maryland State Archives, MS A SC 112, 286)

WI-487  
Parsonsburg Survey District

Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson Atlas  
1877

