



The J.P. Houck Tannery

SE Corner of Water and
Liberty [German] Streets

Workers turned cowhides into
leather on this site from the
early 19th century through
the mid 1920s. The height of

production here occurred in the late 19th and early twentieth century, under the name of the J. P. Houck Tanning Co. In apparent partnership with the large Philadelphia Leather firm of England & Walton, Houck purchased the existing tannery site of Jonas Loewenbach in 1878, expanding the facilities significantly in early 1886, and as the 1912 Sanborn map reveals, continued to expand during the early 20th century. The buildings and equipment employed by the Houck Tannery eventually included 5 steam engines, 2 "dynamos" for generating electricity—powering the first lights in the city—and a dedicated railroad spur for consuming train loads of bark harvested from the nearby forests. The tannery closed in the mid 1920s. Some of the records of the J. P. Houck Tanning Company were saved from destruction and are available to researchers in the Special Collections Department, Carrier Library, James Madison University.

—From JMU history major, Trey VanHout,
"Leather Tanning in Harrisonburg, VA," 2007



<http://gtsc.jmu.edu/shps/map>