



Community Bulletin



Walk of the Descendants

John Brown Sesquicentennial a Success

Persistent weekend rains did little to dampen the enthusiasm of thousands of visitors attending the 150th commemoration of John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry NHP this past weekend.

In 1859, abolitionist John Brown, believing he could free slaves, selected Harpers Ferry as his starting point. Determined to seize the 100,000 weapons at the arsenal and to then use the Blue Ridge Mountains for guerrilla warfare, Brown launched his raid on Sunday evening, October 16, 1859. His 21-man "army of liberation" seized the armory and several other strategic points. Thirty-six hours after the raid began, with most of his men killed or wounded, Brown was captured in the armory fire engine house (now known as "John Brown's Fort") when U.S. Marines stormed the building.

Brought to trial at nearby Charles Town, Brown was found guilty of treason, of conspiring with slaves to rebel, and murder. He was hanged on December 2, 1859. John Brown's short-lived raid failed, but his trial and execution focused the nation's attention on the moral issue of slavery and headed the country toward civil war.

Commemorative events began on Friday. Over 100 walkers braved the elements that night for the symbolic

trek retracing the six-mile route that Brown and his men took from the Kennedy Farm to Harpers Ferry. The commemorative walk concluded with a moving candle-lit program at John Brown's Fort.

Saturday's activities were well attended, especially the premiere performance of "Tattered Souls," a theatrical jazz performance by composer/arranger/musician Delfeayo Marsalis. Played to a standing-room only crowd, many in attendance said it was the highlight of their weekend.

Creative hands-on activities kept visitors of all ages actively engaged in the Family & Youth Tent. Who knew reading, writing and art could be so much fun? "The only problem, besides the weather," said one mother as her children participated in an art activity, "is there is so much to do and we can't do it all."

As skies brightened a bit on Sunday, the Walk of the Descendants program followed the footsteps of Brown and his men during the raid. Descendants of townspeople, militia, marines, raiders and John Brown participated with special readings as ranger David Fox recounted the events of the raid. Alice Keesey Mecoy, great-great-great-granddaughter of John Brown said,

"This weekend, commemorating such an important part of history, has been an emotional roller coaster that I have been honored to be a part of."

The U.S. Marine Corps Historical Company and the Marine Band from Quantico Marine Base presented the role of the marines during the raid and entertained with music of the period. Lt. General G.R. Christmas, USMC Ret., led a procession and wreath laying at John Brown's Fort honoring USMC Pvt. Luke Quinn, killed during the raid.

Excerpts from "John Brown's Body" by Stephen Vincent Benet were introduced by Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who said this poetry had been her uncle's favorite. Her uncle was President John F. Kennedy. Presented by actor Danny Glover, Fred Morsell, JaBen Early, Terry Leonino and Greg Artzner and accompanied by the Maryland Symphony Orchestra String Ensemble, the performance was unforgettable. Many visitors were excited to see Danny Glover and thrilled he had taken the time and had an interest in this historical commemoration.

One visitor perhaps summed it up best. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime event and I wanted my family to be a part of it. It's something we'll remember forever."

Veterans Day Free for Veterans and Military

Interior Secretary Salazar will continue the practice of admitting free-of-charge U.S. Veterans, members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families to most public lands managed by the Dept. of the Interior and Agriculture, including Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, on November 11, Veterans Day.

“The fine men and women of the armed forces, both past and present, have fought to keep all Americans free,” said Kempthorne. “Allowing free admission to our public lands is a small, but appropriate way for us to say ‘thank you’ to these American heroes and their families. My hope is that they experience an enjoyable day on our nation’s public lands.”



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The history of Harpers Ferry has few parallels in the American drama. It is more than one event, one date, or one individual. It is multi-layered, involving a diverse number of people and events, decisions and actions that influenced the course of our nation’s history. Visit Harpers Ferry and step into history.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
P.O. Box 65
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425

Visitor Center
304-535-6029

Harpers Ferry Historical Association Bookshop
304-525-6881

Harpers Ferry NHP Home Page
www.nps.gov/hafe/

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Upcoming Events

Nov 1 “Under Fire: The Battle of Harpers Ferry 1862” Bolivar Heights Battlefield Members of the living history groups, Baltimore Light Artillery, Fredericksburg Light Artillery and the Liberty Rifles will portray Confederate artillery soldiers and conduct the demonstrations.
Programs at 12, 2 & 3.

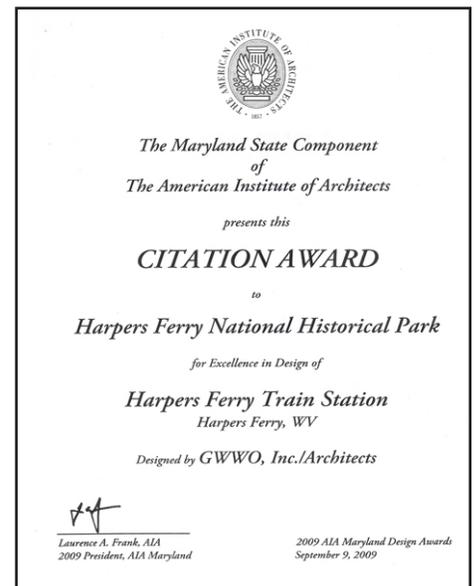
November 7 - 8 “Luxury or Necessity? Victorian Preserved Foods” 11-4pm Join the living history staff and volunteers at Roeder’s Confectionery as they demonstrate the differences between tin can and glass preserved foods.

November 7 “If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery.” 1 and 3 pm Lower Town. Dramatic debate with Fred Morsell as Frederick Douglass and Jim Getty as Abraham Lincoln.

December 5 - 6 “Prospects of Peace: A Soldiers Prayer 1864” Saturday 12-9pm, Sunday 11-4pm A special program focusing on Yuletide 1864 when Harpers Ferry soldiers attempted to create their own version of Christmas on the battle front.

American Institute of Architects Award

The Maryland State American Institute of Architects recently presented a Citation Award to Harpers Ferry NHP for excellence in design of the Harpers Ferry Train Station. Park Architect Peter Dessauer was on hand to accept the award. According to Dessauer, “This is great recognition for a project that took 8 years to bring to completion and restored a vital part of Harpers Ferry history.”



The Quantico Marine Corps Band on parade during the John Brown 150th Commemoration.