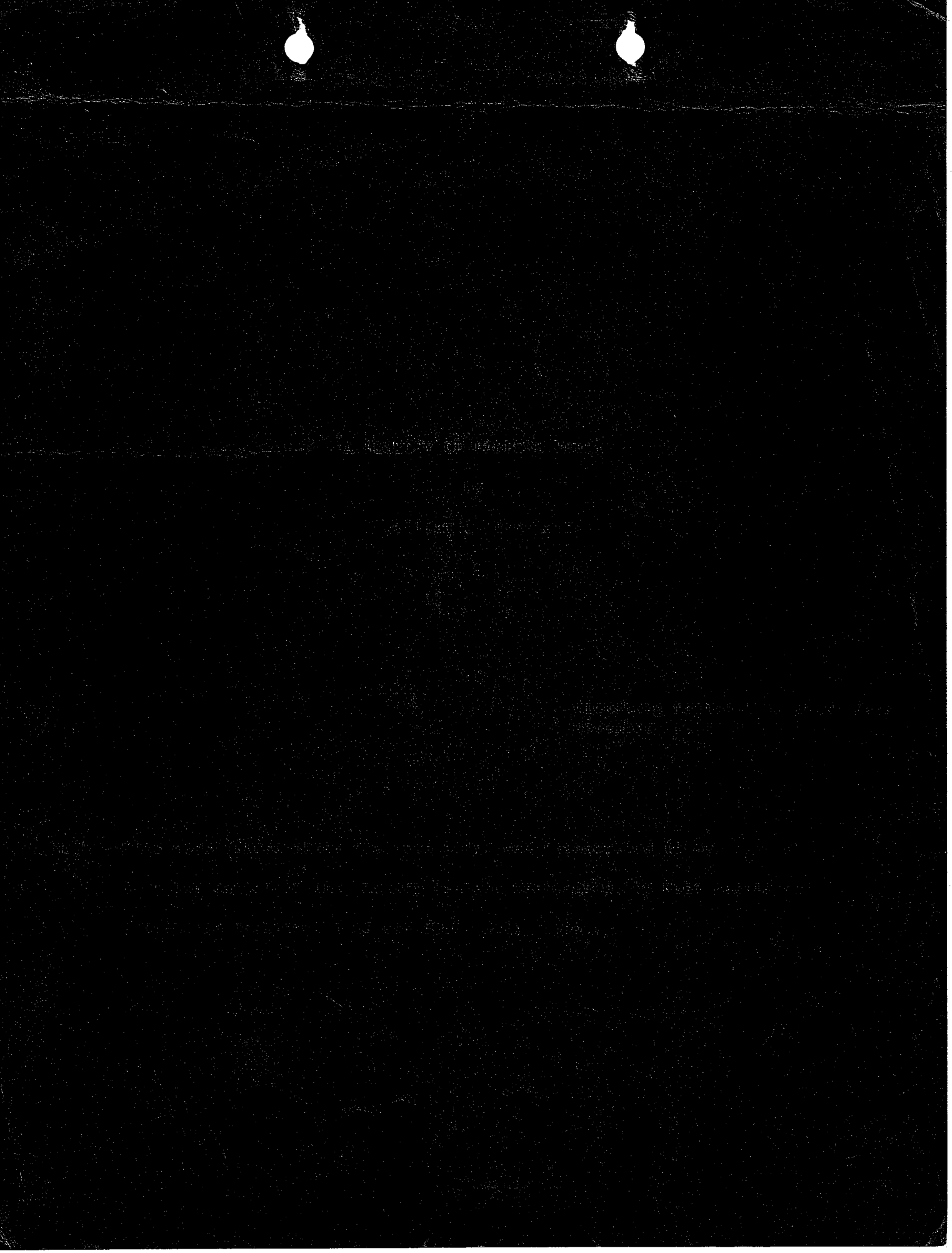


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PREFACE

This work was originally intended to include three fairly equal-in-length parts: the history of the town, the John Brown raid and Harpers Ferry in the Antietam campaign. Research was still continuing when notification of a transfer in station was received. Further research ceased and an attempt was made to write as much of the study as possible before leaving the base of study in Gettysburg. At the time of writing, research on the Antietam campaign was virtually complete, on the John Brown raid largely finished, but on the history of the town much more digging remained.

It was decided to begin with the history of the town. This section of the study was largely completed before leaving Gettysburg. The John Brown section was written in Vicksburg. Other than including a brief account of the Antietam story in the Civil War section, that piece of work for which the research is completed, has not been essayed.

Unforeseen difficulties limited the scope and calibre of work on the study here at Vicksburg. Because of the great amount of work to be handled here at the Vicksburg Park, work on the Harpers Ferry project was done entirely on off time. This meant a slackening in the steady, uninterrupted routine necessary for scholarly writing. The structure of the work seemed to become less sturdy as it was produced in widely separated working periods when much time was needed merely to reassemble the thought pattern which had been reached at the previous session.

The result, then, has been somewhat less than the finished product of historical writing which was aimed for. However with other projects eventually competing with the Harpers Ferry study for the time available, it was felt the point of no return had been reached and that the prepared work might at least serve as a foundation for historians associated with the Harpers Ferry National Monument to complete the main edifice and to erect those many intricate and exquisite wings and storeys which historians so delight in adding to the basic building.

CHAPTER I

The singular land formation surrounding Harpers Ferry[1] is of comparatively recent origin, in relation to the age of the earth. As the young Potomac wound slowly eastward across the plain stretching to the sea, the land rose and the river became imprisoned in its channel. The present day mountains have risen to their commanding heights just east of Harpers Ferry since the establishment of the river bed and the river is the oldest part of the landscape.[2]

Because geography was to be the determining factor in Harpers Ferry's history--bringing industry, roads, railroads and the canal as well as the raid of John Brown and the armies of the Civil War--a description of the topography of the Harpers Ferry area is necessary.

The future town of Harpers Ferry was to be located on the finger of land located where the Shenandoah River, draining the Valley of Virginia, joins with the Potomac and passes through the water-level pass in the Elk Ridge Mountains.[3] Cut through by the Potomac, the Elk Ridge line runs in a generally north-south direction perpendicularly to the river, and its heights north and south of the river look down on the town a thousand feet below.

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1 Harpers Ferry was originally spelled with an apostrophe which common usage eventually dropped. The Census Report of 1890 follows suit.

2 Guthelm, Frederick, The Potomac, 169.

3 The Elk Ridge is a part of the Blue Ridge or South Mountain chain and parallels it. The pass through the main range is a few miles east of Harpers Ferry.

North of the Potomac the rocky bluffs climb precipitously several hundred feet, then slope more gradually upward until the crest is reached about a half mile from the river. This portion of the ridge north of the Potomac is known as "Maryland Heights" and has an elevation of 1, 100 feet.[4]

South of the Potomac the heights of the Elk Ridge rise in a likemanner, abruptly from the river, then less severely to the crest. These heights, measuring 954 feet, are known as "Loudoun Heights", named after Loudoun County, Virginia in which they are located--the Potomac dividing Maryland from Virginia at this point. The Maryland and Loudoun Heights were and are thickly wooded.[5]

Enclosed by the juncture of the two rivers is the finger of land upon which Harpers Ferry was built, pointing toward the gap in the Elk Ridge just to the east. From the "Point", the peninsula widens quickly to the width of a quarter of a mile and then gradually reaching a width of slightly more than one-half mile at the western limit of the present-day Harpers Ferry, about a mile from the Point.

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4 Horizontal and vertical distances are taken from the Michler Map of 1863. Vertical distances are measured from the level of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal opposite Harpers Ferry.

5 When West Virginia was established in 1863, the boundary with Virginia was established along the crest of Loudoun Heights to the Potomac, a half-mile below Harpers Ferry, thence along the Potomac and across to the "Point" of Harpers Ferry and from there west, including everything south of the Potomac.

Surrounding the spot of land on which Harpers Ferry was founded and bordering both rivers is a flat bench of land of varying width. Along the Shenandoah it takes the form of an island group separated from the mainland by a channel, with a general width of perhaps 300 feet. This appendage was quickly seen by early settlers to offer possibilities for water-powered mills which might be erected upon channels cut through the land to utilize the Shenandoah's flow. Eventually a number of island were formed by the channels, the most easterly being known as the Island of Virginius,[6] the group just west of Virginius beingknown as Hall's Islands (after the establishment of Hall's Rifle Works). The level of the island formation is only a few feet above the river and subject to frequent inundations. Rising abruptly from the islands are rocky bluffs, too steep to permit occupation, towering several hundred feet above the river.

At the Point the bench lies about thirty feet above the river and offers good location for settlement. To the north, along the Potomac, the bench is narrower, extending almost the length of present day Harpers Ferry. The site later selected for the U.S. Armory, this level stretch at its widest point is about 200 feet.

Along the Potomac the rise of land from the bench is less severe, permitting settlement on the slopes. From the Point the rise is moderate to Cemetery Hill, then dipping westwardly and rising to a higher elevation at Camp Hill, location of present day Storer College, just opposite the Hall works. From here the ridge drops into what eventually became the town of Bolivar.

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6 Although "Virginius" was the commonly accepted terminology for the entire group.

Beyond Bolivar, at a distance of about two miles from the Point, the ridge of Bolivar Heights stretches from Shenandoah to Potomac. This is the third of the three heights which surround Harpers Ferry, the threebeing destined to play an important military role during the Civil War.

Probably the first white man to visit the Valley of the Shenandoah[7] was the German, John Lederer, who explored the area in the winter of 1669 under commission from Gov. Berkeley.[8]

No more explorations are recorded until 1707 when a party under Louis Michel, a Swiss, explored and mapped the area from the falls of the Potomac to the mouth of the Shenandoah.[9] A few years later, in 1712, a countryman of Michel's, Christopher Baron de Groffenreid, explored the junction of the Shenandoah and Potomac in search of desirable settlement sites.[10]

Following these early explorers came settlers seeking land. "Working their way down the valleys from Pennsylvania, following fertile limestone soils that skirted the mountains, came the Germans, the Scotch, and the other early settlers."[11] Settlements

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7 From an Indian word generally translated as "Daughter of the Stars."

8 Bushong, Millard K., A History of Jefferson County West Virginia, Charles Town, 1941, 7.

9 Gutheim, op.cit.,107. The Michel map of this exploration is in the Public Records Office in London. "Harpers Ferry," Jefferson County Sesqui-Centennial Historic Booklet.

10 Bushong, 7.

11 Gutheim, 107.

in the Shenandoah Valley preceded those in Harpers Ferry, with the great colonizer, Jost Hite, bringing sixteen families to present day Winchester in 1732.[12]

The recorded history of Harpers Ferry begins with its mention in the Chronicles of Virginia in 1719, as "Shenandoah Fall."[13] First permanent settler of the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac was apparently Peter Stephens, a Pennsylvania Dutch squatter,[14] who began operating one boat with the assistance of an Indian known as "Cuttawman Tom", in 1733.[15] Because of its location, the spot was known as "The Hole", and Stephens shortly acquired the nickname of "Peter in the Hole."[16] There were no other settlers when Robert Harper arrived in 1747.

A native of England, this skilled architect and millwright had been engaged by the Society of Friends in 1747 to supervise building operations in the Shenandoah Valley. Stopping overnight in an inn near Frederick, Harper met Peter Hoffman, a trader, and apparently a lover of nature's bounty, who persuaded Harper to enter the Valley by way of "the Hole", a shorter and more beautiful route.

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12 Dictionary of American Biography, IX, 80.
(See also Julia Davis "The Shenandoah" in Rivers of America series.)

13 Stutler, Boyd, Captain John Brown and Harpers Ferry, 3.

14 Bushong, 12.

15 Stutler, 3.

16 Bushong, 12.

Agreeable to the suggestion, Harper, accompanied by Hoffman, shortly reached the ferry and was rowed across the Potomac to the town site which bears his name.[17] As Hoffman had confidently expected, Harper was so struck with the primitive beauty surrounding him, and perhaps equally so with the possibilities which a millwright would see in exploiting the abundant water power, he promptly bought Stephens' log cabin, corn patch, and ferry equipment for thirteen guineas.[18]

In view of Stephens' questionable legal title to the land, Harper traveled to the home of Lord Fairfax, proprietor of the Northern Neck of Virginia in present day Clarke County, Va., and secured undisputed ownership of the tract. It appears that Fairfax welcomed this opportunity to replace the somewhat disreputable Stephens with a more solid citizen.[19]

Harper soon moved his family into Stephens' log cabin, the first dwelling of present-day Harpers Ferry, on what is now the corner of Shenandoah and Potomac Streets.[20] Arranging with Quaker employers to divide his time between his new holdings and supervising their building program, Harper immediately began to improve the ferry facilities and construct a grist mill. The helpful trader

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17 Bushong, 13.

18 Stutler, 3.

19 Bushong, 13.

20 Ibid., 14.

Hoffman was engaged as his agent in the area.[21] Established by the act of the General Assembly in 1763, the town was known as "Shenandoah Falls at Mr. Harper's Ferry" until after the Revolution, later shortened to "Shenandoah Falls", and in 1851 was incorporated as "Harpers Ferry."[22]

About 1775 Harper moved into a residence he built a half mile up the Shenandoah.[23] Shortly afterwards he began work in the stone residence on the slope of Cemetery Hill, his stone being quarried from the rock of the hill. With the other houses in the group of four buildings now standing, it is familiarly known as the "Harper House." Work on the house was interrupted by the labor shortage during the Revolutionary War, which found many townsmen under arms with Washington.

Robert Harper died in 1782 and was buried in the hillside cemetery he had chosen above his home. His will set aside a large plot of ground as a permanent burial ground for the future residents of his settlement.[24]

The founder of Harpers Ferry left no heirs, and his estate descended to Sarah, only child of his brother Joseph, and to relatives of his wife. Sarah Harper married a Wager, and while they never visited the town many of their descendants became residents.[25]

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Barry, Joseph, The Strange Story of Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, 1903, 14.

24 Fairbairn, 11. His own plot, surrounded by a masonry wall, is carefully preserved.

25 The famous "Wager House" of the John Brown raid was built by Wager descendants.

Until its selection as the site for a national armory at the close of the century, the town's growth was slow, its chief stimulus to growth being its position on the route to the Valley of Virginia, at the ferry crossing of the Potomac.[26] Meanwhile the wilderness road through the mountain gap by way of Harpers Ferry to Winchester, an ill-defined trail at first, was being improved by passing traders, explorers and travellers between Baltimore, Washington, Frederick and the frontier.

During this embryonic period George Washington and Thomas Jefferson visited the site and were impressed with its possibilities. Jefferson's delight in "one of the most stupendous scenes in nature" has been well publicized through the years. More enthusiastic perhaps than scientific in his analysis of the land formations of the region, Jefferson still captured the vocal speechlessness experiences by the newcomer to the magnificance of the panorama.[27]

Local tradition holds that Jefferson penned the lines that such a scene "is worth a voyage across the Atlantic" while seated on the rock formation near the grave of Robert Harper, overlooking the Shenandoah River. This singular outcropping of rock was in the early days of Harpers Ferry so well balanced that the entire weight might be moved by the pressure of a child's hand.

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26 It must be kept in mind that at this point the traveller could take advantage of easy passage of both the mountain and the river— the two barriers to transportation and communication.

27 Jefferson, Thomas, Notes on The State of Virginia, 17-18.

Later the supporting pillars were erected by order of one of the armory superintendents when it was feared the foundation was becoming unsafe.

Young George Washington during the middle of the century frequently accompanied surveying parties which inspected the vast holdings of the Virginia aristocracy in this area. Despite local legend to the contrary it seems evident that Washington did not visit the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac as early as 1748, when a party sponsored by Lord Fairfax, which Washington accompanied, surveyed lands west of the Blue Ridge.[28]

In 1794, as war clouds gathered over Europe, Congress, uneasy over the United States' military weakness, and uncertain of the ordnance production of private manufacturers in time of war, directed the President to establish a number of armories where guns could be made and stored, and gave him discretionary power in choosing the sites.[29] The existing state arsenals at Springfield, Mass., and Carlisle, Pa., were expected to be utilized.

President Washington, well acquainted with the environs of Harpers Ferry, writing to Secretary of War Pickering in September 1795, recommended Harpers Ferry for the ready supply of water power available, declaring it to be "the most eligible spot on the river from my point of view."[30]

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28 For the itinerary of this expedition see Freeman, Douglas S., George Washington, I, 213-23.

29 Bushong, 55-6.

30 Gutheim, 214. Washington, with a practiced and interested eye for land values had made many trips through the Harpers Ferry region.

Washington knew that the Potomac, in addition to supplying power, would provide shipping means from the iron furnaces of the upper Potomac downstream to the arms factory in Harpers Ferry.[31]

Under the Act of 1794, establishing the national armories, the government buildings at Springfield were selected as one of the sites for the manufacture of muskets, Harpers Ferry was chosen as the other.[32] (Springfield had manufactured small arms since 1776.) Production was initiated at the former in 1795 but it was not until June, 1796 that a 125 acre triangle of land--with the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers the legs and present day Union Street the base--was purchased from Harper's heirs. In addition a 310 acre parcel of land, covered by Bolivar today, was secured, as well as timber rights on Loudoun Heights, in order to insure a supply of charcoal.[33]

Construction of shops and warehouses for the new Armory and Arsenal was begun immediately. While a critical shortage of gunsmiths and ordnance machinery restricted operations for several years, actual production of arms was inaugurated late in 1796 under the direction of an English Moravian named Perkins, who was appointed first superintendent of the Armory.[34]

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31 Ibid.

32 Notes on United States Ordnance, I, 9.

33 Barry, 16-7.

34 Bushong 56-7. A large number of artisans recruited for the Harpers Ferry Armory in ensuing years were of English descent and descendants of Birmingham gunsmiths.

For the first few years operations were limited by Congressional restriction on number of employees, and by the difficulty of securing skilled gunsmiths. According to the records no arms were completed until 1801, in that year the Armory turning out 293 muskets of the old French infantry type of 1763. By the next year production had gone up to 1472.[35]

During the winter of 1798-99 when war with France seemed imminent, a part of the American forces organized for defense in case of attack and went into camp at Harpers Ferry under General Pinckney, on the ridge between Harpers Ferry and present day Bolivar, since known as "Camp Hill."[36] Many of these early soldiers died while in camp and were buried in the Harpers Ferry cemetery.[37]

The town had grown very slowly from Harper's visit in 1747 until the establishment of the Armory. A few houses, perhaps no more than a dozen or two, clustered on the slope of Cemetery Hill and along the rivers at the Point. Now, with the importation of workmen for the Armory, the great period of Harpers Ferry's growth was to begin.

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35 Satterlee, L.D., A Catalogue of Firearms for the Collector, 301.

36 Ibid., 19. This is the hill now occupied by Storer College.

37 Barry, 19.

CHAPTER II

The half century span from the establishment of the United States Armory and Arsenal to the Civil War marked the real period of expansion for Harpers Ferry. By the end of this period the town had reached the peak of its commercial and industrial prosperity. The successful exploitation of the abundant water power by the Armory attracted industries to Virginius Island to take advantage of the ideal mill sites. The demand for skilled workmen induced artisans from Northern industrial towns to settle in Harpers Ferry and the arrival of the canal and railroad in the 30's more firmly assured the town of continued economic well-being.

An early tourist leisurely enjoying the attractions of Virginia with an eye to mercentile possibilities shortly after the turn of the century, was somewhat disgruntled by the "miserably bad" road from Frederick to Harpers Ferry. But on viewing the scene at the Ferry for the first time, he noted "My pen in vain attempts a description of the scene itself, or the feelings I experienced in contemplating this great work of nature!"[1]

More concerned with the economic development of the town, Caldwell observed,

> Batteaux descend the river in spring and fall, to Georgetown and Washington; they carry from 70 to 120 bbls. of flour, and are from 70 to 75 feet long, and 4 or 5 feet wide; the expense of transport is one dollar per barrel. Accidents rarely happen, and one per cent

1 Caldwell, John Edwards, A Tour Through Part of Virginia in the Summer of 1808, 10-11.

> would be ample insurance for the whole navigation. A communication between the Western and Atlantic Waters has been contemplated by means of the Potowmack.... The United States government have, within these few years, established at this place a manufactory for arms; about one hundred men are now employed; the weighty part of business is conducted by the aid of machinery turned by water, and there are now in the Armory not less than 25,000 stand of arms. Government is considerably increasing, and enlarging the works.[2]

As noted above, the Potomac offered possibilities of cheap transportation to Washington. Generally this was done by crude boats built to withstand unexpected encounters with the numerous rocks which make navigation of the shallow Potomac this far upstream so difficult.

In 1801 production of muskets, copied from the French Model 1763, was initiated at the Harpers Ferry Armory. In 1803 production was expanded to include rifles, and in 1805 the manufacture of pistols.[3] Apparently the Armory heads were given wide powers in producing designs for new weapons, the Secretary of War's instructions to Perkins below merely outlining specifications for what came to be known as United States Rifle, Model 1803.

> There being a deficiency of rifles in the public Arsenals.... You will therefore take the necessary measures for commencing the manufactory as soon as may be after completing the muskets now in hand. The Barrels of the Rifles should not exceed two feet nine inches in length and should be calculated for carrying a ball of one thirtieth of a pound weight.... If you should be of opinion that any improvements may be made on the above construction or any parts thereof, you will be pleased to inform me of such improvements as you think will be useful.[4]

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2 Ibid., 11.

3 U.S. Ordnance, I, 25.

4 Ibid.

The United States Pistol of the Model 1805 was the first hand weapon to be manufactured at a government Armory.[5] By 1810 the yearly production of muskets at the Harpers Ferry Armory was about 10,000, by which time 26,000 muskets and rifles and 3,000 pistols had been turned out, the majority stored in the arsenal.[6]

Between 1810 and 1820 the inventive ingenuity of a Marine gunsmith developed a rifle which was to play a significant role in the history of Harpers Ferry as well as of United States infantry armament.

John Hall, a resident of Portland, Maine, received in 1811 a patent on a breechloading rifle destined to become known as the Hall Rifle, first breechloader to be used by U. S. military forces.[7]

In 1813, with the United States at war, Hall made application to the government for acceptance of his rifle. But it was not until considerable contemplation that tests were ordered for Hall's rifle and its design was not finally accepted by the War Department until 1819. One hundred rifles had been manufactured for testing by the War Department, and in tests against the standard army musket, the Hall Rifle proved superior in accuracy and rapidity of fire.[8]

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5 U.S. Ordnance, I, 26.

6 Satterlee, 301.

7 Sharpe, Philip B., The Rifle in America, 12-13.

8 Ibid.

After proving the worth of his invention with the hundred trial rifles, in 1819 Hall signed a contract with the government to produce 1,000 of his breechloading rifles for army use at one of the national armories. Harpers Ferry was selected as the armory and in 1819 John Hall moved to Harpers Ferry.[9]

On his arrival Hall was assigned two new buildings in the area just to the west of the Island of Virginius, a half mile up the Shenandoah River. Other buildings were later added and dwellings for the workers erected. This development soon became known as "Hall's Rifle Works."

Hall was assigned for his residence the brick building now known as the "Lockwood House" overlooking the Point on the brow of the Harper Cemetery. In this house the next year a son was born to the Halls, Willard Preble, whose accomplishments as lawyer, soldier, congressman and Governor of Missouri were to rival those of his father.

Although put in production more than forty years before the Civil War, the Hall rifle had not replaced the old muzzleloader by 1861. Its chief handicap originally was its flintlock construction, soon adapted as a percussion weapon.[10(?)] Another early shortcoming was the loss of pressure at the breech, due to its breech opening, which resulted in a lower muzzle velocity. However

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9 Jefferson Republican, 20 September 1951, "John Hall's Breech-loading Rifle."

10 Sharpe, 12-13

in 1825 the first 1,000 rifles were completed and issued to army troops, and a contract for another 1,000 entered upon. By 1835 more than 11,000 of the Hall Rifles had been completed.[11]

Hall utilized a comparatively simple plan for his revolutionary idea.[12] By touching a spring, a section of the breech rose at the forearm permitting the charge to be placed in the chamber without use of a ramrod, the ball being pressed to the powder by hand.

One of the advantages of the Hall Rifle was that breech-loading permitted designing of the chamber larger than the barrel, thus permitting use of an oversize ball which would more completely seal the bore and prevent escape of powder gas. Another advantage was that the danger of multiple-loading--so common in Civil War battles--would be eliminated. However the escape of gas at the breech gave the Hall Rifle a muzzle velocity several hundred foot-seconds less than the regulation muzzle loaders.

Of .52 calibre, 52.5 inches from butt to muzzle, weighing 10 pounds 4 ounces, the Hall Rifle fired a ball-type round, and was manufactured as a rifle, smoothbore, and carbine at Harpers Ferry.

Tested by a government board of officers in 1837, the Hall Rifle was found definitely superior to the standard army rifle in range, ability to resist wear, and rapid reloading.[13] The Hall

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11 Ibid., Satterlee, 301.

12 The following description is from Sharpe, 13.

13 Bushong, 78-9. One of the developments at the Harpers Ferry Armory was a brown lacquer coating for the rifles which apparently was found only on weapons manufactured at Harpers Ferry

Rifle could be loaded and and fired eight times each minute, against the muzzle-loaders maximum of two shots per minute.

By 1828 the government was sufficiently convinced of the merit of Hall's breechloader that contracts were let with other manufacturers in order to expand the limited facilities of the Harpers Ferry plant.[14] Most of these contracts were discontinued because of inability to meet Hall's exacting standards for interchangeable parts--a manufacturing process in which Hall was one of the pioneers.

The original contract for 1,000 of Hall's breechloaders was not completed until 1824, at which time another contract was signed for 1,000 more. In 1828 a third contract was entered into, this time for 6,000 rifles. The Hall Rifle, later manufactured also as a carbine, was continued at Harpers Ferry until 1844.[15]

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and did not appear on any rifles after the burning of the Harpers Ferry Armory in 1861. An excellent preservative, the lacquer was not affected by weather, oil, or acid and of such durability it could be removed only by scraping. Jefferson Republican, 20 September 1951, citing Claude Fuller, The Breechloader in Service.

14 Jefferson Republican, 20 September 1951.

15 U.S. Ordnance, I, 59. One of the early uses of the Hall carbine was John C. Fremont's second pathmarking expedition to the west in 1843, armed with the Hall "breech-loading rifled carbine, a piece fired by flintlock, but using ready-fixed ball-and-powder cartridges, and susceptible of rapid reloading."(?) Nevins, Allen, Fremont, 130.

While Hall is generally remembered for his invention of the breech-loading rifle, probably a greater contribution was his development of arms manufacture on so exact a scale that the parts were interchangeable--a development which anticipated modern assembly-line techniques.

In 1816, as he negotiated with the government for acceptance of his rifle, Hall wrote:[16]

> Only one point now remains to bring the rifles to the utmost perfection, which I shall attempt...to make every similar part of every gun so much alike that it will suit every gun, so that if a thousand guns were taken apart and the limbs thrown promiscuously together in one heap, they may be taken promiscuously from the heap and will all come right. This important point I conceive practicable, and although in the first instance it will probably prove expensive, yet ultimately it will prove most economical, and be attended with great advantages."

Weapons so made, Hall declared, "would be strong, durable and simple, easily kept in order, easily repaired when out of order, perfectly accurate and capable of being fired with the greatest quickness."(?)[17] Manufacture by interchangeable parts had not yet been perfected and its accomplishment would be an important contribution to technology.

During the next eleven years, Hall's experiments were to result in the successful achievement of his goal. In 1827, the Commissioners appointed to investigate Hall's invention, carried out experiments to determine the success of Hall's efforts with interchangeable parts. To Harpers Ferry were sent 100 rifles, made by

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16 Fuller and Stewart, 67.

17 Ibid.

Hall three years before. These were stripped down to their parts, the parts intermixed and scattered over a work bench. One hundred new stocks were then brought from Hall's Rifle Works and the 100 rifles assembled from the mass of parts. As to the result, the Commissioners reported that they were "unable to discover any inaccuracy in any of their parts fitting each other." As to the value of Hall's process to the manufacture of arms, the Commissioners declared,

> If uniformity, therefore, in the component parts of small arms is an important desideration (which we presume will not be doubted by anyone the least conversant with the subject) it is in our opinion completely accomplished by the plan which Hall has carried into effect. By no other process known to us...could arms be made so exactly alike as to interchange and require no marks on the different parts. And we very much doubt whether the best workmen that may be selected from any armory, with the aid of the best machines in use elsewhere, could, in a whole life, make a hundred rifles or muskets that would, after being promiscuously mixed together, fit each other with that exact nicety that is to be found in these manufactured by Hall.[18]

That this precision was unequalled by foreign or domestic manufacturers at that time and was the progenitor of precision manufacturing is the opinion of Fuller and Steuart.

> This rather definitely fixes the Hall [rifle] as being the first arm to be manufactured on a production basis that was completely interchangeable and a careful search of early works on mechanical arts gives it the further distinction of being the first commodity of any kind made up of numerous parts to be so produced any place in the world. It will be recalled that the regular output of the United States armories were not considered interchangeable until the Model of 1842 went into production.[19]

18 Ibid., 68.

19 Ibid., 69.

The expanding Armory, officially known as the United States Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, soon developed into three divisions--the Armory stretching some 2,000 feet along the Potomac; the Arsenal, across the street from the Armory entrance, where the complete weapons were stored and displayed; and Hall's Rifle Works along the Shenandoah.

In 1821 discription of the government works lists thirteen buildings.[20] The Armory property consisted of thirteen two-story brick buildings, facing each other in two rows, across a seventy foot yard. Between the Armory and the slope to Cemetery Hill was Potomac Street. Beside the Armory ran the Potomac. The gate of the Armory was a block from the "Point" of the town.

A mile and a quarter up the Potomac a dam had been constructed which diverted water into a canal (the United States Canal). At the Armory this dam was several feet above the level of the yard, its drop providing the water power.

The area above the Armory along the slope facing the Potomac was landscaped during this period and planted with shrubs and flowers adding a great deal to the natural beauty of the town.

By this time the chronicler estimated the number of dwellings in the town as 130. While there were as yet no

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20 This account from a manuscript in possession of Mrs. E. Bruce Allen, Moorefield, W. Va.

churches,[21] the town boasted four school teachers and a circulating library, as well as a general store and a tavern.[22]

In 1821 one of the oldest newspapers of Jefferson County--the Virginia Free Press, then known as the Harpers Ferry Free Press--was founded at Harpers Ferry by John S. Gallagher. Wishing to move to a more central location in the county, the Free Press was moved in 1827 to Charles Town.[23]

In 1825, the residents of "Mudfort", a community lying just to the west of the Camp Hill ridge of Harpers Ferry, petitioned the General Assembly of the State of Virginia to receive the name of "Bolivar," in honor of the great South American liberator, Simon Bolivar, whose exploits in behalf of Latin American independence were being viewed with appreciation throughout the United States.

Originally containing the fringe of population from Harpers Ferry, Bolivar's growth eventually placed her on an equal population status with Harpers Ferry.

Although originally separate, the expansion of the town eventually brought their borders into contact with one another. Most accounts of Harpers Ferry and of the population of Harpers Ferry generally consider Bolivar part of Harpers Ferry, an error not to be lightly dismissed by residents of the former.

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21 The first recorded church in Harpers Ferry is the Catholic Church built in 1833. Barry, 7.

22 This record lists the paymaster's house on Shenandoah Street as being one of the government buildings standing in 1821--one of the buildings to be acquired by the Harpers Ferry National Monument

23 Bushong, 255.

CHAPTER III

During the decade 1830-40, Harpers Ferry achieved its position as an important center on the transportation and communication line between the Ohio and Shenandoah Valleys and the East.

By 1830 a semi-weekly stage coach service connected Harpers Ferry with Washington, the one-way trip requiring a full day.[1] The same year a turnpike company was founded to construct a sixteen mile macadam toll road from Harpers Ferry to Middleway, five miles west of Charles Town.[2]

But the signal impetus to Harpers Ferry's commercial position was supplied in the mid 30's by the arrival of canal and railroad. Waging a bitter battle to reach the rich Ohio Valley and carry its trade to the East, impeding each other's progress at every opportunity, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and Baltimore and Ohio Railroad reached Harpers Ferry a few months apart, with the C & O winning the race to this point.

Following the winding Potomac westward from Georgetown, the C & O reached Harpers Ferry in November 1833, seventeen years before reaching Cumberland. Now shippers were provided a cheaper carrier for their products, and passengers could reach Baltimore as quickly by canal as by stagecoach.[3] The canal provided an ex-

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1 Bushong, 81-2.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 82-3

tremely inexpensive means of transportation of goods of all kinds to the East. By "wagoning" it had cost $.85 - $1.00 to ship a barrel of flour to Georgetown; by canal, the shipper could save $.60 on each barrel. Passengers could leave Harpers Ferry at 5:00 a.m. and reach Baltimore and Washington that evening.[4]

The C & O carried its heaviest traffic during the Civil War when the B & O tracks and bridges were constantly being destroyed by the Confederates. The C & O Canal played an important role in delivering heavy equipment to the armies during the war. As Lee retreated during the Gettysburg Campaign, Union bridge trains were placed in the canal and towed to Harpers Ferry for bridging the Potomac.[5] Many times the canal boats themselves were taken from the canal and used as pontoons to lay bridges across the Potomac. During those critical days the B & O relayed to the canal at Cumberland great quantities of supplies for the Army of the Potomac and for Washington's civilian population.[6]

While the B & O lost the race to Harpers Ferry, it reached Cumberland in 1842, well ahead of its water-born rival, and in 1853 reached the Ohio, which the canal never made.[7] The B & O line

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4 Bushong, 82-3.

5 Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 3, 618.

6 Summers, Festus P., The Baltimore and Ohio in the Civil War, 108.

7 Bushong, 82.

reached the north bank of the Potomac opposite Harpers Ferry on December 1st, 1834. One of the familiar and exciting spectacles of United States railroad history was enacted at that point when the first official train reached Harpers Ferry, the populace wildly celebrating the epic event. The train had left Baltimore with a distinguished passenger list at 8:00 A.M., arriving at Harpers Ferry at 2:00 P.M.[8]

For the B & O, reaching Harpers Ferry meant opportunity for quick expansion along any of several routes to the Ohio. Already the Winchester and Potomac Railroad had partially completed its trunk line from Harpers Ferry to Winchester, 32 miles distant, occupying an important location at the head of the Valley of Virginia.[9]

In March, 1835, the Winchester and Potomac's locomotive "Tennessee", pulling two passenger cars, made the first trip from Winchester to Harpers Ferry, linking the Valley with the main B & O line to the East.[10]

A very interesting sidelight to the history of transportation at Harpers Ferry is the development of the bridges over the Potomac and Shenandoah. Covered bridges had come into use early in the 1800's, the sheathing protecting the wooden bed of the bridge against the elements.

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8 Ibid., 83-4

9 Hungerfield, Edward, The Story of the B & O Railroad 1827-1927, New York, 1928, 148-9.

10 Bushong, 83.

The cornerstone of the first bridge of modern construction was laid in October, 1824 with Lewis Wernwag the architect.[11] This structure spanning the Potomac River was 750 feet from abutment to abutment and was thought of as a "handsome double wooden bridge."[12]

The early Shenandoah River bridges were located at Bridge Street, opposite the Catholic School lot, at the site of the original ferry. When these bridges occasionally went out with the spring floods, someone always operated the ferry boats until the bridges were restored, two lots along the bank being designated as Ferry lots.

The early bridges were all toll affairs, as they were erected privately by individuals or concerns as were the early toll highways. In the 1850's toll for crossing the covered Shenandoah bridge was sixpence.[13]

While the B & O had reached the Maryland shore opposite Harpers Ferry late in 1834, two years were required to construct a railroad bridge across the Potomac. The problem facing the architect, Wernwag, was a complex one. At both ends of the bridge a 90° change in direction would have to be negotiated in a distressingly short distance. Entrance to the bridge from the Maryland bank would necessarily have to be placed where railroad, highway, and

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11 Clipping in possession of C. J. Fairbairn, Charlestown, W.Va.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

canal were crowded together on the narrow space between the river and the sheer bluffs of Maryland Heights.

This unfortunate geographical arrangement prevented Wernwag from swinging a gradual curve of the tracks onto the bridge. A similar situation was faced on the south bank of the river at Harpers Ferry. Here the Armory grounds fronted the river, giving the railroad only a narrow space along the shore for its tracks--again preventing a gradual curve of the railroad onto the main line. Wernwag's Novel solution, lacking space to bend the track bed on the shore, was to curve the bridge at either end to ease the angle at which the tracks entered on the banks.

This "Wernwag Timber Bridge," a series of wooden arches covered with a timber sheathing, was completed in 1836. Because of the scarcity of space along the north shore, both the railroad and highway were carried by the bridge which contained six spans and was 900 feet in length.[14]

To connect the Winchester and Potomac branch line to the Valley, a "Y" was formed in the bridge near the south bank of the Potomac. The B & O took the western branch of the "Y" and continued up the Potomac on the south shore. The Winchester and Potomac occupied the left branch to link its track along the Shenandoah.

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14 Hungerford, 149-50.

On reaching the Harpers Ferry shore, the B & O completed the curve from the bridge and followed the south shore of the Potomac. From the bridge westward the tracks and trestling were supported by a high masonry wall which also served as a restraining wall against high water. The Wager House hotel and railway depot faced the B & O tracks as they emerged from the bridge.

The Winchester and Potomac skirted the north shore of the Shenandoah after passing through the "Point" of Harpers Ferry. The tracks traversed the length of the Island of Virginius, supported by trestlework most of the distance of the island, passing just to the rear of the masonry wall which enclosed the main buildings of Hall's Rifle Works.

Fourteen years after the completion of the Wernwag bridge (it fell down twice), a metallic truss-type bridge designed by Wendell Bollman, master of the road for the B & O, was constructed to replace the old structure. Of more sturdy construction, this "Bollman Bridge" consisted of six arches of 130 feet and one arch of seventy five feet span over the river and an arch of 100 feet span over the C & O canal--the whole measuring about 900 feet.[15] This bridge, with arches of timber and iron, and covered with wooden sheathing, was the bridge used by John Brown and his followers entering Harpers Ferry on the night of October 16th, 1859.

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15 Ninety-Four Years of Bridges at Harpers Ferry.

The retreating Confederates burned the bridge in June, 1861, after their first occupation of Harpers Ferry and traffic was not resumed until Union engineers were able to construct a temporary affair in the spring of 1862.

During the entire history of the Armory at Harpers Ferry, a struggle was waged between those who sought to keep civilians in control of the plant and those seeking replacement of the civilians with military officers. Previous to 1841 all superintendents were civilians, their "military" titles the result of being militia officers, or were titles of courtesy.[16]

But in 1841, with the appointment of Maj. Henry Craig, a new era was initiated at the Armory, in line with a new governmental policy of replacing civilians with military officers in all national armories.[17] The hitherto rather loosely-run Armory was "tightened" with a more military discipline, a condition which the workers had stubbornly resisted through the years.

Previously the piece workers were permitted to regulate their hours to their own pleasure; now they were compelled to labor the same hours as did the day workers. Armed guards were posted at the gate to regulate both visitors and workmen in their passing.[18]

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16 The Superintendents: Perkins, 1796-1810, James Stubblefield, 1810-29, Col. Dunn, 1829-30, Gen. George Rust, 1830-37, Col. Edward Luchs, 1837-41, Col. Henry K. Craig, 1841-44, Maj. John Symington, 1844-51, Col. Benjamin Huger, 1851-54, Maj. Bell, 1854, Henry W. Clowe, 1855-58, Alfred M. Barbour, 1859-61. Barry (?)

17 Bushong, 89-90.

18 Barry 32

An effort was made by the new regime to eliminate the problem of drunkeness among the workmen. In the early days of the Armory it had long been the custom for the gunsmiths to hang buckets of whiskey in the shop from which periodic encouragement might be received. The interval between needs for encouragement became so restricted that drinking of whiskey "in the shop" was prohibited under Stubblefield, (1810-29) which the men obeyed by putting their heads out of the window while tossing off a quick one.[19] Now, under Craig, drinking was absolutely forbidden.

Against the invasion of sacred rights the workers rebelled and in 1842 a group of them chartered a canal boat and traveled to Washington to present their grievances to President Tyler, who, while greeting them most cordially, advised that they "hammer out their own salvation."[20] Embittered by the military jurisdiction, the workmen and their town supporters continued to fight until they were successful in overthrowing the system of military superintendents in 1854.

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19 Ibid., 33.

20 Ibid., 34-7. One old duffer was so delighted to meet his Chief Executive that, thrusting out a horny hand of tremendous size and dubious cleanliness, he exclaimed "Hullo, old fellow, give us your corn stealer." Ibid., 36.

The completion of the most famous structure of the Armory, and of the town was recorded in the Chief of Ordinance's report to the Secretary of War in 1848: "An Engine and Guard House, 35 1/2 x 24 feet, one-story brick, covered with slate and having copper jutters and down spouts has been constructed and now occupied."[21]

Located just inside the Armory gate, this modest brick building, divided into two rooms--one in which the fire engines and apparatus were stored and the other in which the Armory watchmen spent most of their watch period--was to be the last refuge of John Brown during his capture of the Armory in 1859.)

During the existence of the Armory at Harpers Ferry, the government continued to own most of the land occupied by the town, in addition to the Armory, Arsenal, and Rifle Works sites. Through the years sales to individuals were made and at intervals regular disposals of government holdings were held, as in 1852 when the Secretary of War ordered a considerable portion of government property made available for purchase to the employees of the Armory.

Such action, on the part of the government, was intended to insure the stability of the artisans--owning his own home would tend to increase his permanence of residence and his interest in the welfare of the town and Armory.

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21 Letter from Boyd B. Stutler to writer, 5 January 1952.

22 Barry, 40.

As a part of the same policy, and exemplifying this same feeling of responsibility to Harpers Ferry, the government in 1852 also made liberal donations of land for religious, educational, and civic purposes.[23]

In 1852, Harpers Ferry suffered its greatest flood since the arrival of the white man.[24] The peculiar physical location of Harpers Ferry, in relation to its water supply, while insuring industrial development, also presaged disaster from high waters. At this time a large part of the town was clustered along the slopes leading down to the Shenandoah and Potomac, and on the low, level stretch which borders both rivers. At time of high water, these low areas, including the whole of the Island of Virginius, much of Shenandoah and Potomac Streets, and the Armory yard, were generally flooded. These floods inflicted great damage to property and the danger from high waters prevented a greater exploitation of water power by mills and factories, which most probably would have greatly increased the size and productivity of Harpers Ferry. As it was, Harpers Ferry's population was fairly stable for several decades before the Civil War.[25]

By 1850, Harpers Ferry and Bolivar had a population of 2,801, of whom 155 were slaves.[26] The slave population of Jefferson

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Bushong, 87, 97.

26 Census Report, 1850. Charles Town, the county seat, had 1,507.

County, with an area of about 210 square miles, which John Brown hoped would rally to his army a few years later, was 4,341.[27] Production at the Armory during the ten year period between 1840 and 1850 was 72,974 muskets and 12,696 rifles, a total of 85,670.[28]

With sectional antagonism increasing steadily, Harpers Ferry occupied a middle position geographically and politically. The town had been staunchly Federalist[29] and later just as staunchly Whig after 1835.[30] By the election of 1860 Jefferson County was divided. An industrial town, with many inhabitants drawn from Northern factory towns, and with a small slave population, Harpers Ferry nevertheless was of the Southern tradition. Jefferson County had always been strongly pro-Union.[31] In 1833 it had strongly supported Jackson against the South Carolina threat of secession, and in 1860 supported Bell, the compromise candidate dedicated to "maintenance of the Union and the Constitution." While Harpers Ferry gave its support to Douglas, also a Union candidate, the County went for Bell, the vote being Bell, 959, Breckinridge, 458, Douglas, 440. Lincoln received no votes,[32] showing the County's distaste for any suspected attempt to tamper with the peculiar institution.

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27 Ibid. The Baltimore Sun, 19 October 1859, estimated there were 20,000 slaves within 20 miles of Harpers Ferry.

28 Satterlee, 302.

29 Bushong, 75.

30 Ibid., 77, 89.

31 Ibid., 100-01.

32 Ibid.

Despite the election of Lincoln, Jefferson County remained pro-Union when, in April, 1861, Virginia called a convention to consider the problem of secession. The County's vote showed overwhelming support for preservation of the Union[33] and the conservative delegates, Alfred M. Barbour, Superintendent of the U.S. Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, and Logan Osburn, were elected to the Convention, representing a constituency hopeful for saving the Union.

Barbour did not vote at the Convention and later signed the Secession Ordinance.[34] Following ratification of the Ordinance on April 17th, Barbour the next day returned to Harpers Ferry with the hope of rallying the Armory workmen to the Southern cause and saving the priceless arms and machinery for the Confederacy.[35]

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Barry, Ill.

CHAPTER IV

For Harpers Ferry the Civil War was a personal experience -- of forced evacuation of citizens, of destruction of homes and mills, of battles and raids and skirmishes, of continual passage and bivouac of troops, of pillage and ruin in the wake of armies. A terrible indication of the horror to follow was the destruction by fire of the Armory on April 18th, 1861.

On January 2nd, 1861, Superintendent Barbour of the Armory informed the Ordnance Bureau that he had reason to believe an attack would be made on the government works.[1] While the armories had been organized into volunteer companies, there was no real protection for the works and he asked for regular troops to be despatched immediately. A company of troops from Carlisle Barracks was promptly forwarded;[2] however their commander notified the Adjutant General that any attempts on his part to strengthen the defenses of the Armory would "excite the already feverish feeling" of the citizens, perhaps goading them into attack.[3]

During the ensuing months, preceding Virginia's decision to secede, the previous strong Union sentiment of the region was subject, as was the case throughout the South, to immediate change when attempts to invade or interfere with the sovereign rights of the state were observed. For this reason the defenders of the

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1 Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. 51, Part I, 308.

2 Ibid., 309

3. Ibid., 310

Armory dared not prepare the works for defense, lest such action might provoke the townspeople to seize the arms and machinery. In the end, a policy of watchfulness was adopted -- the one goal being the prevention of the valuable weapons and works from falling into hostile hands.

On April 15th, following the fall of Sumter, Lincoln had issued his call for 75,000 troops which so inflamed those border states not yet decided upon Union or secession. On the 18th, Virginia seceded. When it became certain that Virginia would secede, a meeting in Richmond headed by ex-Governor Wise, decided upon capture of the Harpers Ferry Armory.[4] Next day, Superintendent Barbour was at Harpers Ferry, gathering the workmen around him and urging that they cooperate with Virginia when the state took possession of the arms plant.[5]

D. H. Strother, soon to gain fame for his war-time sketches as "Porte Crayon," and a resident of Jefferson County, passed through Harpers Ferry on the 18th and witnessed the tense scene.[6] Soldiers stood in groups awaiting orders, crowds of people thronged the streets, and many arguments and fistcuffs marked this day of "wildest excitement."[7]

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4 John D. Imboden, "Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah," Century, June 1885. This meeting was on the 16th. It is interesting to note that Gov. Wise, leading his state's prosecution of John Brown for capturing the Armory a year and a half before, now contemplated a similar action at Harpers Ferry.

5. Bushong, 145.

/7/ Barry, 112.

6 D. H. Strother, "Recollections of the War," Harper's Magazine

Because so many of the artisans were not native Virginians, but drawn from other, chiefly Northern, industrial areas, and because they looked to the Government and the Armory for their livelihood, Lt. Jones commanding the small garison of troops hoped they would resist action by Virginia troops. However during the evening of the 18th, Jones had wired Washington that hostile troops had been reported a few miles from Harpers Ferry and that the attack would be made that night.[8] Powder trains in the ships had been laid so that the buildings could be fired instantly and the 4,300 stand of arms in the arsenal[9] completely destroyed.[10] Later that night, as Virginia volunteers marched over Bolivar Heights toward Harpers Ferry they saw a sudden flash which illuminated the countryside, followed by a dull roar;[11] the U.S. Armory had been fired.

The invading troops were slow in arriving,[12] giving townspeople opportunity to carry spoils from the workshops as well as appropriating clothes, food, and weapons from the soldier's quarters. Gen. Kenton Harper, who had been wrongly informed that a strong force was guarding Harpers Ferry and who was making preparations for an attack,[13] marched into the town early on the 19th and took

8 Official Records, II, 4.

9 Ibid., 6.

10 Ibid.,

11 Strother, Harpers Magazine, June, 1866. Jones reports firing the works shortly after 10:10 P.M. Official Records, II, 4.

12 Ibid.

13 Imboden, loc cit.

possession. While the Arsenal and Armory buildings were gutted by fire, much of the machinery and many salvagable weapons were confiscated by the Southerners.[14]

The destruction of the Armory was a blow to Harpers Ferry, the seriousness of which was realized only after the close of the Civil War when normal activities were resumed. For 1,670 acres of land, water power improvements, walls and embankments, hydraulic machinery and buildings, the government had spent $1,787,430 since its establishment in 1796, a large industry for those times.[15] The eventual departure of the several hundred families depending upon this enterprise for their sustenance was the greatest single set-back in the town's career.

While the firing of the government works had gutted the interiors of the buildings, most of which were brick and stone, much of the arms-making machinery was saved by the Confederates.[16] Immediate steps were taken to get the plant into partial production in order that the many partially destroyed weapons might be put into usable condition. Such action was imperative in view of the great shortage in Virginia and throughout the Confederacy of arms.

Virginia had less than 60,000 muskets on hand at the time of her secession, of which 54,000 were the old flintlocks now badly

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14 The engines of John Brown's famous fort, used to barricade the doors against Col. R.E. Lee's marines, were used by workmen to help extinguish the flames. Strother, loc. cit.

15 Official Records, II, 6.

16 Journal of Southern History, XVII, #1, 181.

out of date.[17] While extreme efforts were made from the start in order that the salvaged machinery and parts at Harpers Ferry might add to this small supply, actually the Confederates were to have but little success before the machinery of the Armory and Rifle Works was shipped to permanent arms-plants in the South.

Of the many problems in strategy facing Lee when Virginia had placed him in command of her forces, that of whether an attempt should be made to hold Harpers was one of the most perplexing.[18] Viewed from the Confederate position, if Harpers Ferry could be held, many benefits would accrue: manufacture of arms could be accelerated using the machinery recovered from the fire; its loss would mean loss of prestige and interruption of communication with Maryland and injure the Confederate cause in that border State with which the North and South sought alliance;[19] if lost, Harpers Ferry would threaten the communication system and the supply of the armies in the valley of Virginia. With the attitude of the mountainous western part of Virginia indicating possible defection from the Confederate cause, it might be necessary to secure Harpers Ferry to insure loyalty of this region.[20]

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17 Official Records, I, 386-7.

18 Of the seven problems in tactics Lee was faced with, Freeman places that of Harpers Ferry as number two. R.E. Lee, I, 478-9.

19 Official Records, 2, 910.

20 Henderson, G. F. R., Stonewall Jackson, 90.

Summing up the political significance of Harpers Ferry in the early stages of the war, especially in helping hold the region of western Virginia, the Confederate Inspector General noted that Harpers Ferry must be held,

> because of its relation to Maryland and as the entrance to the valley of Virginia, the possession of which by the enemy will separate the eastern and western sections of the State from each other, deprive us of the agriculture resources of that fertile region, and bring in its train political consequences which it is well believed you cannot contemplate without the most painful emotions.[21]

Of further advantage to the North was the threat which Harpers Ferry constituted against any attempt by Southern forces to push north of the Potomac and threaten the Union industrial centers. At first not generally appreciated, because the fear of Confederate invasion was not so marked as later in the war, McClellan pointed out "no capable general will cross the river north of this city (Washington) when we have a strong army here (Harpers Ferry) ready to cut off his retreat."[22]

But while its retention was of incalculable military advantage strategists agreed that the holding would be a difficult matter. It could be easily turned from both above and below. A Federal force could be brought by rail to Hagerstown, thence seven

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21 Official Records, II, 924.

22 August 4, 1861, memorandum to Lt. Gen. W. Scott, Official Records, V, 7.

miles to the Potomac crossing at Williamsport, twenty miles above Harpers Ferry, from which place a short march into the Valley would serve to sever Harpers Ferry's communications with Winchester and seal off the town.[23] Below, an expedition sent out from Washington along the line of the Manassas Gap railroad would also cut Harpers Ferry's communications.[24] In view of importance to the Union of isolating western Virginia from the Confederacy, Lee felt the latter would constitute the first Federal move against Harpers Ferry.[25]

Meanwhile, the task of assembling, equipping, and drilling of troops was underway, with Harpers Ferry selected as one of the recruiting and training camps. Martial law as at once substituted for civil law in Harpers Ferry,[26] and Maj. Gen. Kenton Harper, in command of operations, directed to accept companies of volunteers from nearby counties. Enthusiastic volunteers marched to Harpers Ferry immediately and clamored to be mustered into service, and shortly organized units began to arrive from far-off Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi, and these sun-burned recruits, wearing a variety of uniforms and semi-uniforms were enthusiastically greeted by the townspeople upon their arrival in Harpers Ferry.[27] Soon the ridges and slopes

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23 Official Records, II, 891

24 R. E. Lee, I, 484

25 IBid., 505.

26 Barry, 115-16.

27 Ibid.

above the town became dotted with tents, and "Camp Hill", which had earned its name in the Revolutionary War, was again to serve as a military encampment.

For the first few weeks after Virginia's secession, officers of the State militia were in command of the enthusiastic but ill-disciplined volunteers. The organization of the militia was theoretical, however, and the paper force was top-heavy with high-ranking officers who were "civilians in gaudy uniforms."[28] Actually the militia set-up was a paper affair, overloaded with field grade officers who cut a dashing figure in camp but might be confused by the problems of a battlefield. These "feather bed" officers[29] were invariably surrounded by a numerous staff, and the official display at Harpers Ferry during their regime "would have done no discredit to the Champs-Elys'ees."[30]

But the festivities of these officers were soon ended. In order to permit naming of competent officers to positions of command, the State legislature deposed all militia officers above the rank of captain and authorized the Governor to fill the vacancies. While many of the volunteers denounced this measure as a denial of the rights of a freeman, and numerous companies met in convention to protest the outrage, the appointment of a new commander to replace Gen. Harper soon brought military discipline to Harpers Ferry.

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28 Henderson, 87.

29 Barry, 115-16.

30 Henderson, 87.

On April 28th Col. Thomas J. Jackson was appointed to command of the post[31] with instructions to muster troops into State service, organizing them into regiments and battalions.[32] That the garrison must be placed in immediate state of preparedness was emphasized by General Lee, whose first communication with Jackson cautioned that the machinery and materials of the Government works "and everything of value herein" were to be removed as quickly as possible to safety at Strasburg, in view of a "probable" attack upon Harpers Ferry from Pennsylvania.[33]

While machinery immediately required in Richmond was prepared for shipment, Jackson made very attempt to utilize everything possible not destroyed by fire in order to contribute to the critically needed supply of arms. Reporting to Lee on May 7th, he noted that 1500 muskets could be completed within a month at the rifle factory and "My object is to keep the former factory working as long as practicable without interfering with its rapid removal."[34]

From Jackson's arrival, the "tightening up" of the camp began. In place of Harper's large staff, Jackson had but two assistants, like Jackson attired in the plain blue uniforms of the Virginia Military Institute.[35] Assisted by several cadets from V.M.I. he diligently drilled his raw recruits.[36] Jackson established his

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31 Official Records, II, 787. This was Jackson's second official visit to Harpers Ferry. The first had been with his V.M.I.cadets to witness the hanging of John Brown at Charles Town.

32 Ibid., 793

33 Ibid., 794

34 Official Records, II, 814 - 15

36 Imboden, Loc cit

headquarters in the Wager House,[37] the hotel near the Potomac River bridge. Now Harpers Ferry and its environs took on the trappings of a war-time post. The adjacent hills were covered with tents and all the workshops and public buildings were converted into quarters for troops.[37] Officers and men began together as recruits, learning the school of the soldier, and seven hours drill daily was strictly enforced.[38] By the middle of May Jackson estimated his force would comprise about 4500.[39]

That Jackson realized both the political and military importance of holding Harpers Ferry was shown in his dispatch to Lee of May 7th reporting his command at Harpers Ferry.

> I have finished reconnoitering the Maryland Heights and have determined to fortify them at once, and hold them, as well as the Virginia (Loudoun) Heights and the town, be the cost what it may.... The heights west of Bolivar must be strengthened.... I am of the opinion that this place should be defended with the spirit which activated the defenders of Thermopylae.... The fall of this place, would, I fear, result in the loss of the northwestern part of the State, and who can estimate the moral power thus gained to the enemy and lost to ourselves?[40]

In addition to his problem as a soldier--recruiting, equipping, training and readying his troops for battle--Jackson had other problems, many with political significance. Two of the latter were the uncertain relations between the Confederate government and the two border areas of western Virginia and Maryland.

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37 Harpers Magazine, June, 1866, 22.

38 Henderson, 88.

39 Official Records, II, 832.

40 Citation?

Both the Union and Confederate governments were seeking the allegiance of Maryland during this early period of uncertainty for the border states, and each hesitated to antagonize Maryland by any unnecessarily provocative act. Jackson realized his position at Harpers Ferry would be untenable should Maryland Heights be occupied by Union forces, and therefore felt it should be held and defended "be the cost what it may".[41] Lee felt that such action "may interrupt our friendly arrangements with that State" and suggested that Jackson refrain "until actually necessary and under stern necessity."[42]

Feeling the situation demanded stern measures, Jackson determined to send a force to the heights but to include volunteers from Maryland to partially pacify that State. Writing to Lee on May 15th, former Senator Mason noted that he had learned the day previous in Harpers Ferry that "four or five hundred" of Jackson's troops had occupied the heights.[43] A few days later the Inspector-General, examining Jackson's efforts at Harpers Ferry, reported that "redoubts are now going up" in Maryland Heights and that little more work would be necessary to secure that ground,[44] thus initiating, under Jackson, the defensive works which the next year would be carried by Jackson's own men during the Antietam campaign.

41 Official Records, II, 814.

42 Ibid., 825.

43 Official Records, II, 849.

44 Ibid., 861.

Another, and more trying problem faced by the Richmond authorities, was the threatened defection of the western section of Virginia. The hardy mountaineers had been loyal to the Washington government and showed evidences of restiveness when Virginia's decision to secede was made. By the first week in May there were distinct signs of revolt in the troubled area.[45] Jackson at Harpers Ferry, of course, could play only a limited role in this political skirmishing, but he urged troops be dispatched to the northwest.[46] On May 21st Jackson's despatch to Lee revealed that "things are growing worse" and that he had sent troops to Williamsport to curb Union sentiment,[47] and that as soon as ratification by the people of the secession ordinance was announced, troops should be rushed to crush out opposition.[48] Jackson's suggestion was that by strengthening Harpers Ferry, confidence would be roused in those loyal to the Confederacy, and troops would be available to prevent the only action which would insure the northwest's freedom--aid from Federal troops.[49]

Another difficult situation for Jackson was the amount of control he should exercise over the B & O railroad. This 379 mile line from Baltimore to Wheeling, crossing the Potomac at Harpers Ferry, was the most eastern junction point on main line in Virginia, where it was joined by the short Winchester and Potomac trunk line which was carrier for commerce of the lower Shenandoah Valley counties.[50]

45 R. E. Lee, I, 504.

46 Official Records, II, 810, 833.

47 Ibid., 863.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid. 50 Summers, 63-4.

The B & O, partially in Federal and partially in Confederate hands, was suspected by both of giving aid to the other. Both Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, and Governor Letcher of Virginia warned the B & O that such action would be followed by retaliatory acts.[51] Finally arrangements were worked out to satisfy both sides and regular passenger service, freight, and mail continued throughout the greater part of May, with flour from Shenandoah mills and coal from western Virginia destined for the Federal Navy, permitted to pass.[52]

Militarily, the intercourse should have been cut off immediately by closing the B & O bridge at Harpers Ferry. But the Confederate leaders feared the interruption of trade might damage the Southern cause in Maryland and western Virginia, and there was still hope Maryland might join the Confederacy. Therefore regular service was permitted, and the great northern artery of supply and communication was kept open. Military and civilian merchandise was purchased in Baltimore and shipped to Harpers Ferry by the B & O, while Gen. Harper had sent to Southern sympathizers in Baltimore a shipment of muskets. Then came Jackson's stroke of May 23rd.[53]

The ratification of the Ordinance of Secession by the Virginia voters was to take place on May 23rd. Anticipating the result, which would permit Confederate military occupation of western Virginia to force obedience to popular will, Jackson planned a coup

51 Ibid., 56-9.

52 Summers, 63-4.

53 The following account of this maneuver is taken from Summers, 65-7.

which would help solve the shortage of rolling stock and locomotives on Southern railroads.

Jackson had under his control fifty miles of the B & O tracks. From a point twelve miles east of Harpers Ferry, at Point of Rocks, to a point thirty-two miles to the west, the B & O was double-tracked and was carrying, at this time, a heavy coal traffic. On May 15th Jackson ordered night traffic on the railroad to cease, as the constant rattle of the cars kept his troops awake. This of course forced employment of the double tracks to full capacity during the day.

Soon Jackson complained the heavy day time traffic interfered with his military schedule and ordered all traffic limited to the two-hour period between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. This section of the B & O promptly became the busiest stretch of track in the U.S., and while B & O officials, no doubt, feared the next step, they were powerless to prevent it.

On the 22nd Jackson ordered Capt. S. D. Imboden to cross the Potomac the next day and occupy Point of Rocks--the eastern terminus of the double track, permitting west bound trains to pass during the two hour period, but halting all those heading east. At 12:00 noon he was to close the line. Col. Kenton Harper, now commanding the 5th Virginia Infantry, was to carry out the same orders in reverse at the western end of the double track at Cherry Run. From 11:00 to 12:00 noon on the 23rd, a long stream of coal and freight cars entered the eastbound track at Cherry Run, but none of the empties

heading west were permitted to pass. At noon the traffic was shut off and in the trap were fifty-six locomotives and more than 300 cars, whose value to the Confederacy could hardly be calculated.

Disposal of the captured stock was more difficult. The trunk line ended at Martinsburg and from there the locomotives were drawn by 32-horse teams which hauled them down the Valley turnpike to Strasburg and put into service on the Manassas Gap line[54]—shortly to be used by Gen. Johnston in transporting his troops to the battlefield of Bull Run.

This was Jackson's only exploit while commanding the post at Harpers Ferry and the next day he surrendered his command to Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, brought from Montgomery by the War Department to assume direction of the Confederate troops around Harpers Ferry.

Shortly afterwards, when the troops at Harpers Ferry were reorganized into more closely-knit fighting units, Jackson was given command of the First Brigade of the Army of the Shenandoah, destined to become Jackson's famed Stonewall Brigade. Attached to Jackson's brigade at Harpers Ferry was the Rockbridge Artillery under Captain W. H. Pendleton, formerly rector of Lexington and eventually to be Lee's chief of artillery. When the battery arrived at Harpers Ferry it was quartered in a church—all the town's churches being subject to constant army requisition[55]— with the pulpit assigned to Capt. Pendleton as

54 Ibid., 100.

55 According to Barry, only the Catholic Church in Harpers Ferry was able to preserve its identity and continue services throughout the war.

being worthy of his calling. Touched by the religious possibilities of the situation, the guns of the battery were promptly named Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.[56]

56 Henderson, 93N.

CHAPTER V

On Johnston's assuming command, the force at Harpers Ferry consisted of five Virginia, two Mississippi and one Alabama regiments, one Maryland and one Kentucky battalions, five artillery companies and one naval battery, the aggregate amounting to about 8,000 men.[1] Since the Virginia troops were only partially supplied with tents, the majority were quartered in houses in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar.[2] Lt. Col. J. E. B. Stuart commanded the cavalry, with Capt. Turner Ashby guarding the flank at Point of Rocks.[3] The naval battery of 32-pounders was posted in the northern and southern extremities of Bolivar Heights, covering approaches to Harpers Ferry from the west; the greatest danger, it was felt, would be from a Federal force crossing the Potomac in the vicinity of Williamsport and moving on Harpers Ferry from the northwest.[4] The Confederates were confident that the approaches by way of the B & O or by Maryland Heights could "easily be defended."[5]

However the Inspector General, in closing his report pointed out the hazardous position which Harpers Ferry occupied on the perimeter of the Confederate defense line and predicted the tactical withdrawal which Johnson would soon be forced to adopt:

> But if the war is to assume much larger proportions, it might be possible for the enemy to shut up our force now assembled there, and with superior numbers pass on with

1 Official Records, II, 867-8.

2. Ibid., 868.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 869.

5 Ibid.

> a heavy force and occupy the valleys beyond, in Western Virginia. If this should ever be suspected to be the plans of the enemy, of what use would it be to hold on to Harper's Ferry? In such a state of affairs it would be much better to abandon the Ferry altogether, remove the machinery, destroy the buildings, blow up the bridge, and move out into the valleys....[6]

With this survey, Johnson soon recorded his agreement. Two days later he sent his estimate of Harpers Ferry's strategic position.[7] While frontal attack (from the north, that is, along Maryland Heights) was not feared, the position could be easily turned by Federal troops crossing the Potomac above or below Harpers Ferry and cutting off the town, in which case the defenders could not be relieved. Harpers Ferry then Johnson considered untenable against a strong enemy and his plan was to utilize his force as a mobile unit capable of meeting Federal forces where occasion demanded; to try to defend Harpers Ferry would bind the garrison to a fixed point and permit the Federals unrestricted movement.[8] By the end of June Johnston's command numbered about 10,500.[9]

Since the practicable roads from the west and northwest and from Manassas meet the route from Pennsylvania and Maryland at Winchester, Johnston selected that Valley communications center as the position to which his command might withdraw and activate the campaign in the Valley.[10] Gen. Patterson's Union command was expected to move down the Valley turnpike, which meant Johnston must be prepared

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8 Ibid., 471.

9 Ibid., 187.

10 Ibid., 471.

to face him there, and also to prevent a junction with Gen. McClellan's forces operating in western Virginia.[11]

Both Davis and Lee[12] hoped to hold Harpers Ferry as long as possible, especially for the above-discussed reasons of possible effect upon Maryland and western Virginia, but Lee gave Johnston leave, when opposed by a force large enough to turn Harpers Ferry into a cul-de-sac, to "destroy everything that cannot be removed which may be of advantage to the enemy. Deprive them of the use of the railroad, take the field, and endeavor to arrest their advance up the valley."[13] With Union forces threatening from the north, Harpers Ferry prepared for the first of many changes in occupation which she would experience during the next four years.

As Johnson quickened the tempo of his preparation to meet the Federal advance, June witnessed the movement into the south of the Union forces which had been poised for the attack.

At Chambersburg Gen. Robert Patterson, veteran of the War of 1812 was mobilizing a force numbering about 14,000,[14] with which he intended to move on Harpers Ferry via Hagerstown and Williamsport. Patterson, however, believed that the Confederates would give "desperate resistance" at Harpers Ferry[15] and that the Bolivar

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11 Ibid.

12 Lee noted that Davis had placed "great value" on retention of Harpers Ferry, the loss of which would interrupt communication with Maryland and "injure our cause in that state." Ibid., 910.

13 Ibid., 898.

14 Official Records, II, 18.

15 Ibid., 661.

Heights line and Maryland Heights would be found well fortified.[16]

Johnston's decision to abandon Harpers Ferry was quickened somewhat by Col. Lew Wallace who carried out an unauthorized but very successful attack on a Confederate force at Romney, sixty miles west of Harpers Ferry, on June 12th. Receiving exaggerated accounts of this action as being the vanguard of McClellan's army advancing from the west,[17] Johnston immediately began the operation of evacuating Harpers Ferry. On the 15th Patterson, pushing southward from Hagerstown, learned that Harpers Ferry had been evacuated on that day.[18]

Johnston's army moved out of Harpers Ferry on the morning of the 15th in order to protect Winchester against the advance of Patterson if the Union forces moved up the Valley.[19] Before leaving, Johnston carried out his orders to "destroy everything at Harpers Ferry--the bridge across the Potomac, platforms, and trestle work included--which could serve the purpose of the enemy, and retire upon the railroad towards Winchester, carrying with you all the rolling (?) stock and destroying the road behind you."[20]

The most valuable military facility at Harpers Ferry was the Potomac River Bridge,[21] carrying both highway and B & O traffic and linking the B & O to the Shenandoah Valley via the Winchester

16 Ibid., 669.
17 Ibid., 471.
18 Ibid., 686.
19 Ibid., 472.
20 Ibid., 924.
21 Of seven spans, one of 122 feet, one of seventy-six, four of 127 and one of 131 feet in length. The bridge was covered with wooden planking to protect the bridge bed. Extracts from B & O Report, 1861, Baltimore, 1862.

and Potomac Railroad. Its destruction would mean the cutting of the direct supply line of Washington and Baltimore with the West, a blow both to the movement of war materials and troops. Careful preparation had been made by the Confederates to blow the bridge for some time previous to the evacuation under supervision of the engineers.[22] Early on the 14th, the day before the evacuation, the bridge was blown and burned--only the stone piers remaining. Traffic over the B & O was not to be restored until the following spring.[23] In addition the remaining machinery in the Armory and Rifle Works which had not yet been removed was sent to Winchester along with all public property which could be carried.[24] While little of value in the arms plant escaped fire or transferral to Southern armories, in 1863 Daniel J. Young, formerly master machinist at the rifle factory, was sent from Washington to take charge of ordinance and all government property at Harpers Ferry and remained until sale of government property in 1869.[25]

While Patterson continued his slow advance on Johnston's force at Winchester, the townspeople who had evacuated Harpers Ferry during the Confederate occupation began to drift back. D. H. Strother, visiting the town the day after Johnston moved out, noted that debris

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22 Barry, 121.

23 It is generally agreed that the number of times this bridge was destroyed and rebuilt during the war is nine. Stutler, 30, Barry ?

24 Official Records, II, 472.

25 Barry, 168. Apparently all machinery and stores except a few gun-stocks (?) were removed before evacuation. For removal of machinery and its destruction see Official Records II

from the bridge was still smoldering and burning where it had fallen between the piers. The armory buildings were bare, except for a few very heavy pieces. The town was beginning to take on the deserted look it would soon possess, with many of the artisans and their families leaving Harpers Ferry to follow the Confederate cause. Many of the citizens sympathetic to the North, who had taken refuge in Maryland during the Southern reign now were returning in boats to rejoin their families.[26] The pattern for future occupation, destruction and evacuation, both civilian and military, which was to plague the town throughout the first three years of the war, was being established.

These residents who elected to remain during the trying period suffered the inconveniences or worse which inevitably follow in the wake of armies. Of course the population of the town dropped off tremendously during this period. The destruction of the Armory meant the loss of livelihood for a great number of the families in the area, and the necessity of moving to another location. A great number of the able-bodied men entered Union or Confederate service, while most of the remaining artisans sought employment in Northern or Southern industry.

During the first Confederate occupation government property was seized and those families renting houses from the government were obliged to seek shelter elsewhere and the buildings used for

26 Stutler, Harpers, July, 1866, 143.

troop quarters.[27] Regular business ceased in the town and the usual war-inspired traffic developed, of which baking pies and smuggling whiskey continued to flourish throughout the war, despite the stringent orders against the latter.

As a result of the civilian exodus from the town many of the dwellings were abandoned, some with furnishings intact, and were commandered by officers for their troops.[29] The damage to such dwellings as a result of soldier occupance was undoubtedly enormous, while sections of the town were burned as retaliatory measures by both armies.

To the casual troops, Harpers Ferry became "familiar ground" as a result of the continual passage of troops through this center of intercourse with the Valley.[30] But the attrition of war soon reduced this once busy and prosperous community to such a state of deterioration that in less than a year a northern regiment declared that it was "at that time, (March, 1862) as ever afterward, the most complete wreck of a city that we ever camped in."[31]

While Harpers Ferry was generally of Southern sympathy, the citizenry felt, as do most people caught between two belligerents who have little time or sympathy during hostilities for the feelings or property of civilians, that both sides were represented by

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27 Barry, 116.
28 Ibid.
29 Ward, Joseph R. C., History of the One Hundred and Sixth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, 25.
30 Gould, John M., History of the First-Tenth-Twenty-ninth Maine Regiment, 276
31 Ibid., 105. History of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, 100.

"an undisciplined armed rabble" against whom they were helpless to defend their possessions.[32]

For most of the Union soldiers passing through, Harpers Ferry meant the place of martydom of John Brown, and his "fort" was conveniently situated on the route of march through the town. The railroad bridge, although many times rebuilt by the Army Engineers, was available only for railroad traffic during the war. Troops, artillery, and supply trains used a pontoon bridge thrown across the Potomac a short distance above the bridge. The exit of this pontoon bridge on the Harpers Ferry shore was at an opening in the masonry wall which ran along the Armory yard and protected it from floods. As the troops marched through this passageway into the Armory yard the engine house in which John Brown had fortified himself during his raid faced them directly across the Armory yard and their line of march would take them within a few feet of the now historic building as they tramped out the Armory gate and down Shenandoah Street.[33]

Many of the troops in passing would sing "John Brown's Body".[34] Those encamped in the vicinity would come to gaze with awe at the loop hole between the doors through which Brown and his men had fired on the militia, and many would ship wooden splinters from the window sashes and send them home for souvenirs.[35] Few Federals passing through

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32 Barry, 146.

33 The story of the career of the bell on the engine house forms an interesting part of the history of the John Brown Fort. The engine house contained fire engines for protection of the government works and a bell was mounted to give warning. During the early part of

Harpers Ferry failed to visit this point of interest.[36]

Like the public buildings, and many of the homes, the churches of Harpers Ferry were put to "ignoble" uses during the war.[37] The only church to escape destruction or desecration during the war was the Catholic church, whose minister remained to defend church property. While only slight damage was done by stray bullets to the Catholic Church, the nearby Methodist Episcopal church was destroyed and never rebuilt. The Lutheran Church on Camp Hill was used as a hospital, as were many of the churches, somewhat badly used during hostilities and later renovated. The Presbyterian church received

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the war this bell was lifted by a company of Union soldiers from Marlboro, Mass., and shipped back to the soldiers' home town. The bell was a proud relic and in the 1890's was hung in front of the G.A.R. Hall in Marlboro. When the G.A.R. passed out of existence the building and bell were acquired by the local American Legion post and the bell hangs today as it did when first erected. Since this Marlboro company was composed chiefly of firemen, they were probably bell conscious. Letter from Boyd B. Stutler to writer, January 5, 1952.

34 Under the Maltese Cross, 86; Ward, 26.

35 Ibid.

36 Mulholland, St. Clair A., The Story of the 116th Regiment Pennsylvania Infantry, 33. Preston, N.D., History of the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry New York State Volunteers, 132.

37 Barry, 171.

perhaps the most severe treatment, the upper portion being used as a guard house and the basement as a horse stable.[38]

Because of its strategic location on the border, Harpers Ferry was the scene of various irregular activities during the war. Spying was a flourishing trade for civilians as well as military personnel. The roads from Harpers Ferry to Leesburg, Winchester, and Martinsburg were infested with irregulars, camp followers, and stragglers who committed outrages on life and property of travellers.[39]

The environs of Harpers Ferry were also the territory into which cavalry raiders, of more or less official military status, conducted their operations. The most famous local organization was the Loudoun Rangers, under Samuel C. Means. A prominent citizen and successful businessman in Loudoun County (which borders Harpers Ferry south of the Shenandoah River), Means was a Unionist who was commissioned by Secretary of War Stanton to raise a company of cavalry for operations principally in the strategic area around Harpers Ferry.[40] The Loudoun Rangers had an unending succession of skirmishes and raids with their Confederate counterparts under Moseby. While both Union and Confederate headquarters considered their own rangers to be regularly appointed soldiers, they viewed

38 Ibid., 171-2.

39 Ibid., 147-8.

40 Goodhard, Briscoe, History of the Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers, 27.

with suspicion and disfavor the activities of the enemy raiders, the Official Records of the war carrying highly uncomplimentary dispatches concerning their military status and soldierly capacities. This unending activity of small actions, hit and run scraps, nuisance raids, and patrols seeking information on enemy whereabouts was highlighted by the capture of two notorious Confederate swashbucklers--"French Bill" and John Moberly.[41]

"French Bill", alias "Billy the Frenchman", alias William Loge, shortly before the war arrived from France,[42] deserted from the Federal Army, and, joining Moberly's band, became a "notorious murderer and bushwacker."[43]

When he and Moberly were accused of murdering a captured surgeon of the 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry,[44] efforts to capture him were redoubled and in December Gen. Stephenson, commandant at Harpers Ferry wired Gen. Sheridan for instructions as to disposition of the prisoner. Sheridan's order, which ended French Bill's career was brief. "As soon as you can have fully ascertained that you have French Bill as your prisoner take him out and hang him."[45]

41 "Mobberly" in the Official Records.

42 Barry, 157.

43 Official Records, XLIII, part 2, 721.

44 Goodhart, 174.

45 Official Records, XLIII, part 2, 721. The legend, unconfirmed, at Harpers Ferry is that the initial attempt to hang him failed and that the surgeon who examined him finished him off with a knife in return for the murder of his fellow surgeon.

Even more earnestly sought by Union forces at Harpers Ferry was Moberly, the leader of the guerillas, who "murdered citizens and took their property"[46] and whose "gang of murderers infesting Loudoun...have done incalculable service for the rebels for the last four years."[47] Moberly, whose parentage was uncertain, had grown up near Harpers Ferry in Loudoun County. Joining the Confederate cavalry at the age of 17, he had a dramatic career of fighting, spying, and robbing settlers and supply trains.[48] Efforts to capture, many of them at great preparation, were unsuccessful until shortly before the end of the war when General Stephenson granted a liberal reward to civilians who would lead soldiers to Moberly's hideout. Placed by informers in the hayloft of a barn used as a rendezvous by Moberly, Union soldiers shot down the ill-fated cavalryman on April 5th, 1865, and his body was brought back to Harpers Ferry and dumped for public view before army headquarters.[49]

46 Goodhard, 196.

47 Official Records, XLVI, part 3, 444.

48 Barry, 147-8.

49 Official Records, XLVI, part 3, 445, 590; Goodhart, 196-8; Barry 147-8.

CHAPTER VI

After Johnston's evacuation on June 15th and during Patterson's maneuvering against him in the valley, there was no military activity in Harpers Ferry until June 28th.[1] On that day a detail of the 2nd Mississippi under Col. Faulkner entered the town and took care of a few details which the main body had neglected to attend to before its departure. The rifle factory was further demolished, the covered bridge over the Shenandoah was burned and a railroad engine and car standing on the tracks along the Potomac were run off the destroyed bridge into the Potomac.[2]

While McDowell prepared for his advance against Manassas Junction, Patterson continued his slow advance against Johnston. The Confederate high command still hoped that Johnston might prevent Patterson's occupation of Harpers Ferry and save this bastion in the lower valley. Patterson's somewhat indefinite orders were to "remain in front" of Johnston, offering battle if the opportunity presented itself.[3] Johnston continued to hold the south bank of the Potomac in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry as Patterson pondered ways of shifting his base to that place.

With Union and Confederate pickets facing each other across the river, occasional sniper fire was inevitable. On July 4th, the

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1 Barry, 121.

2. Ibid.

3 Official Records, II, 725.

first officially recognized skirmish of the war at Harpers Ferry took place when the Confederate picket guard opened fire on Federal scouts attempting to cross the Potomac.[4] In short order two companies of the 9th New York were despatched from Sandy Hook. A fire fight took place, the Confederates located in buildings along the river front and behind the abutments of the bridge, and the trestling of the railroad. The percussion muskets of the Federals were no match for the longer-ranged Southern weapons and they were forced to retire with several casualties, including one dead and one mortally wounded.[5]

It was during this initial action that civilian casualties were experienced for the first time by the town. A shoemaker named Harding, encouraged by strong stimulants to needlessly expose himself, was wounded.[6] That night a Union straggler taking a casual pot-shot across the river fatally wounded Mr. F. A. Roeder, a prominent citizen of the town and, ironically, a strong Unionist.[7] Even more ironical was the place of his death, very near to the spot where Heywood Shepherd, a free Negro, was the first person shot by Brown's raiders. (?) Both strongly supported the cause which killed them.

From Martinsburg, Patterson on July 18th occupied Charles Town which he found unoccupied, and sent troops into Harpers Ferry.[8] Troops at Sandy Hook were immediately put to work getting the C & O Canal into operation, preparing the entrance to the ford across the Potomac,

4 Official Records, II, Part I, 7.

5 Ibid., 7-8.

6 Barry, 122.

7 Ibid., 123-4.

8 Official Records, II, 169-70.

putting a ferry in operation, and beginning preparations to restore the bridge.[9] Harpers Ferry soon became the depot and headquarters for the Union forces in the Valley.

Harpers Ferry's chronicler sadly disclaimed any improvement in the town's welfare with the influx of Union soldiers, who helped themselves to everything which the Confederates had overlooked. While Patterson's force was largely composed of "three-months men", the residents expressed doubt as to the validity of this terminology, holding rather that no one could develop such capacity for larceny in so short a time. Hen's teeth, it was reported, were just as plentiful as any other part of the fowl.[10]

While the Union Army was in nominal control of the B & O for some distance west of Harpers Ferry, the track was constantly subjected to raiding parties intent on putting the road out of commission. Such raids were common throughout the war and especially during the Potomac crossings of the Confederate armies in 1862, 1863 and 1864. The destruction of railroads by both sides became somewhat standardized in method. The following is a typical example of Confederate destruction of the B & O in the Harpers Ferry region.

> Over a distance of seventy-five miles they systematically despoiled the telegraph; burned or pulled down engine houses, water tanks, fuel bins, tool houses, sand houses, stations, platforms; demolished bridges, trestles, and rolling stock... (and) concentrated their efforts on continuous stretches of track. They worked east and west from Martinsburg; for eleven miles they removed, heated, and bent the rails.... Whole sections of the road were removed, almost without a trace.[11]

9 Ibid., 170.
10 Barry, 126.
11 Summers, 124.

By December 1st, the Confederates had removed almost the entire double track between Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, burning the ties and sending the rails south to be used on Confederate railroads.[12]

The railroad bridge across the Potomac was the key to the Union Army's use of Harpers Ferry as a base of operations against the upper Valley of Virginia, Unless the destroyed railroad bridge could be restored, any Union force based south of the Potomac, as at Harpers Ferry, could be supplied only by pontoon bridge. After the disaster to MacDowell's army at First Manassas, the Federal forces had retired to gird themselves for the long costly struggle ahead. First efforts by the Federals to rebuild the bridge were launched in August, 1861, when work on the trestling was begun. Progress was slow because of high water and was interrupted when Union forces withdrew on the 19th. Work was renewed until September 29th when a freshet swept away all but the two trestles closest to the Maryland shore,[13] halting further attempts to secure the bridge until spring.

Failing to rebuild the bridge, and anticipating no advance during the winter, the Union command was withdrawn to the north bank of the Potomac and a period of comparative quiet ensued during the fall.

12 Ibid., 109

13 Report of the B & O, 1861.

General Nathaniel Banks had replaced Patterson in command of the newly formed "Department of the Shenandoah"[14] and in late summer occupied Pleasant Valley[15] with headquarters at Sandy Hook.[16]

Activities in the Valley during the fall were principally devoted by both commands[17] to raising, outfitting, and training troops to fight the campaigns which would be initiated with the arrival of good weather in the spring. Banks moved his headquarters to Frederick for the winter, leaving the 13th Massachusetts at Sandy Hook for observation and guard duty.[18] Jackson wintered at Winchester. With the railroad bridge still out, Union troops could not base at Harpers Ferry, while Confederates had no need to occupy it in force.

While the first winter of the war was a relatively quiet one for Harpers Ferry, the residents suffered from an uncontrollable urge among the Yankee privates across the river to fire upon any suspicious, or Confederate-looking characters they saw moving in the town.[19] Occasionally a squad or two of Federal infantry would cross the river on a skiff and scout the town. Now and then outposts would exchange bored shots between the shores.

In these picket exchanges, the Federal riflemen were generally at a disadvantage, as recorded by a member of the 13th Massachusetts, on duty near Harpers Ferry.[20]

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14 Official Records, II, 171.

15 Between the Elk Ridge and South Mountains.

16 Barry, 127

17 In November Stonewall Jackson had been placed in command of the Shenandoah Valley District following his success at Bull Run.

18 Ibid., 128. Davis, Charles E., Story of the Thirteenth Massachusetts Volunteers. 16.

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> ...this part of the river was protected by (Union) troops supplied with the old smooth bore muskets of a very antiquated pattern, with too little power to carry the bullet across the river so that they were a constant source of ridicule by the enemy, who were much better armed, and who amused themselves by coming down the river daily, and placing the thumb of the right hand to the nose, and the thumb of the left hand to the little finger of the right hand, and would make rapid motions with the fingers, to the great exasperation of the Union men, who were powerless to prevent it.

With Confederate forces cutting the B & O line at Harpers Ferry and points to the west, the Federal position at Harpers Ferry was weakened. In order to open the line, the War Department in October created a new military area, "The Department of Harper's Ferry, and Cumberland," covering the line of the B & O from Harpers Ferry to Cumberland. Gen. Frederick W. Lander was placed in charge, given 1,000 raw recruits and authority to raise more. His command was to be thrown along the B & O right-of-way giving protection to civilian working parties and preventing further destruction from raiders.[21]

While the area of Harpers Ferry was relatively static during the autumn of 1861. Col. John W. Geary, commanding the 28th Pennsylvania with headquarters at Brunswick, Md., a few miles from Harpers Ferry, made a number of raids south of the Potomac into Loudoun County, Va., attempting to discourage "depredations" against Union sympathizers in that area.[22]

Harpers Ferry's second skirmish of the war, this one a full-fledged attack on the town by Lt. Col. Turner Ashby's command, took

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21 Summers, 104.

22 Goodhart, 26.

place on October 16th, 1861. Early that month A.H. Herr, proprietor of the Island of Virginius and of the large flour mill there, and a Union sympathizer, invited the Federal commander in Maryland to remove his large grain supply across the Potomac for use of Federal troops.[23] Gen. Banks sent the 13th Massachusetts to Harpers Ferry for the task, several days being required to collect the wheat and boat it across the Potomac. During this time there were continued reports of enemy concentrations in the vicinity.[24]

Ashby, soon to be the beau-ideal of the Valley Cavalry, commanded the Southern forces in Jefferson County, Va., and was apparently angered by those "depredations" committed by the Federals at Harpers Ferry.[25] He collected a force of about 500 infantry and 250 cavalry, along with two cannon for an attack against the town.[26] On the morning of the 16th while citizens and soldiers were at work readying the remaining wheat for transporting across the river, Turner's advance was reported.[27] Col. John W. Geary, commanding the Union forces at Harpers Ferry[28] received word that his pickets on Bolivar Heights had been driven back into Bolivar and he prepared his command for the defense.[29] Placing their two cannon on Bolivar Heights at the point where the Charles Town road passes, the Confederates, led by their

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23 Barry, 131. Gen. Banks used the word "seize" in describing the Union appropriation of the grain. Official Records, II, 239.
24 Ibid., 240
25 Ibid., 247
26 Ibid., 248
27 Barry, 132.
28 Which included four companies of the 28th Pennsylvania, and three each of the 13th Massachusetts and 3rd Wisconsin, totalling about 600 men.
29 Ibid.

cavalry, charged down the slope and attacked the main union force in the western edge of Bolivar.[30] Meanwhile Confederate cannon on Loudoun Heights and Union artillery on Maryland Heights joined the struggle.[31]

After several hours intermittent skirmishing, the Union troops essayed a successful advance which drove Ashby from Bolivar Heights and he retreated towards Halltown.[32] In this action, officially designated as a "skirmish", but since referred to by the residents as the "Battle of Bolivar Heights",[33] Geary listed his casualties at four killed, seven wounded, and two taken prisoner;[34] Turner reported thirteen casualties.[35]

Geary, his mission complete, withdrew his units back to the Maryland shore the night of the battle. A few days later a party of Confederate cavalry entered Harpers Ferry and burned Herr's flour mill in retaliation, an irreparable loss to the townspeople.[36] From this time there was no further industrial activity on Virginius until post-war attempts at restoration of the mills began.[37]

The first winter of the war was a desolate one for the town. By now a large part of the inhabitants had deserted their homes. As

30 Ibid., 240, 248.
31 Ibid., 240, 246.
32 Ibid., 241, 245, 247.
33 Barry, 132.
34 Official Records, V, 241.
35 Ibid., 248. A somewhat different total from Geary's estimate of 150 casualties for the Confederates who were evacuated by wagon and horse "as rapidly as they fell." Ibid., 241
36 Barry, 133.
37 Ibid., 170

in the main theater of war in Virginia, there was a lull in the fighting. But with the Confederates free to enter Harpers Ferry from the west, and with Federal sharpshooters posted along the Maryland shore and on Maryland Heights, windows in houses in the town facing the Potomac could not be lighted without accepting risk of drawing sniper fire.[38] Between combatants, fighting was limited to occasional shots exchanged between pickets on either side of the Potomac.[39]

Caught between the armies, the residents of the town were suspect by both. A group of pro-Union men, threatened with conscription by the Confederates, rowed across the Potomac one night during the winter and sought employment with the Federal troops. Viewed with suspicion by the Union commander, they were roughly treated, locked up and later banished back to Harpers Ferry. "Many and various were the adventures of this as well as of other parties of Harper's (sic) Ferry people who were scattered about by the chances of the times."[40]

The exchange of sniper fire across the Potomac proved costly to Harpers Ferry in February of 1862. Federal scouts seeking information of Confederate activities had spent the night of February 6th in Harpers Ferry and at dawn the next morning were returning by skiff to the Maryland shore when they were fired upon by Southern pickets, killing one of the Federals.[41]

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38 Barry, 134-7.

39 Davis, 16.

40 Barry, 137

41 Ibid., 137-8.

Enraged by the death of one of his favorite scouts, Col. Geary sent a detachment of the 28th Pennsylvania, under Major Hector Tyndale, to destroy the water-front area where the Confederates concealed themselves while picking off Union sentries.[42] Tyndale's men obliged, burning out the section of Harpers Ferry between the armory and the B& O bridge[43] — another severe loss to the town for this section included the Wager House, a large hotel and saloon, the railroad station, warehouse, and water tower, and a number of private dwellings.[44]

Early in 1862, Gen. McClellan, carefully organizing his great command for the coming Peninsular Campaign, decided that one of the necessary precursors to the spring campaigns was the opening of the B & O railroad by crossing in force at Harpers Ferry.[45] McClellan arrived in person to conduct the operation, which he felt could be carried out and the rail line opened by securing Winchester and Strasburg.[46] A temporary "batteau bridge" was constructed across the Potomac and movement of troops to the Virginia shore begun.[47]

It had been hoped that a more permanent type bridge might be constructed by passing canal-boats through the lift-lock which was

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Extracts from B & O Report, 1862. Tyndale had accompanied John Brown's wife to Harpers Ferry from Philadelphia just before Brown's execution and had conducted the remains back to New York.

45 Official Records, V, 48.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid. This temporary pontoon bridge, similar to many constructed at Harpers Ferry during the war, consisted of planks placed upon boats anchored with their bows to the current. When the 196th Pennsylvania crossed on February 27th, they reported two bridges, one for men and the other for wagons and artillery. Ward, 24.

located just a few yards from the bridge location along the Maryland shore. At the last moment it was found that the canal-boats floated up the C & O Canal for the operation were too large to pass through the lift-lock and that the permanent bridge could not be constructed.[48] Fearing to throw across large numbers of troops without a dependable bridge to insure the supply line, McClellan contented himself with building up a depot at Harpers Ferry to supply future operations. Federal forces were sent to occupy Charles Town and Martinsburg and by the first of April, the date of McClellan's departure for the Peninsula, the B & O was in "running order." Soon an army of 38,000 men under Banks threatened Winchester.[49]

The critical task in restoration of the B & O was still ahead--the rebuilding of the Harpers Ferry railroad bridge. High water and bad weather prevented work on the bridge from starting until March 4th.[50] The stone piers remained, and it was upon these foundations that the railroad bed was to be laid. Work was pushed twenty-four hours a day and on March 18th a locomotive cautiously pushed across the partially-completed bridge into Harpers Ferry,[51] the first engine to cross the bridge since it was blown by the Confederates in June, 1861. It was not until March 30th that the bridge was completed

48 Official Records, V, 49.

49 Henderson, 164.

50 Extracts from Report of B & O, 1862.

51 Ibid.

and opened for traffic. Well illustrating the importance of this bridge to the Union transportation system, an estimated 3,800 cars passed east and west over the bridge on the first day.[52] Regular passenger service was resumed on the first of April after an absence of ten months.[53]

As Shields pushed up the B & O line clearing the track, Banks took command of the Harpers Ferry area until his withdrawal from Winchester in May. The B & O took possession of the Winchester and Potomac trunk line which connected Winchester and Harpers Ferry, and worked it for the government, contributing to the establishment of Harpers Ferry as a supply base for Union operations in the lower Valley.[54]

So ended the first year of the war for the town of Harpers Ferry. Physically, it had been the victim of severe attrition. The Armory and Rifle Works now consisted of a few gutted buildings which, when roofed over, might serve as warehouses. The Arsenal, across the street from the Armory, was completely destroyed. All of the buildings facing the Potomac at the "Point" had been burned including the hotel and railroad buildings.

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52 Summers, _____?

53 Ibid.

54 Barry, 140.

Production at the mills on Virginius had ended. The government buildings, of which there were a great many, had been intermittently appropriated and occupied by soldiers. Much of the population had left the town, many never to return. Grimly accepting the destruction inevitable in the wake of armies, Harpers Ferry awaited the second year of Civil War.

CHAPTER VII

With the re-occupation of Harpers Ferry by the Union Army in the spring of 1862, a measure of prosperity was enjoyed by the remaining residents. Harpers Ferry became a base of supplies and an important transportation and communication center for Union forces in the Valley. With the opening of the B & O to passenger traffic and the rather informal discipline which habitually surrounded an Army camp during the Civil War, friends would arrive by train to visit soldiers in camp, and people with enterprises would inhabit the town.[1] Many of the townspeople were able to profitably supply the soldiers' needs. With the establishment of order and the expected permanence of Union occupation, many of the citizens who had left during the time when the town was in "No Man's Land" returned to their homes.

In May of 1862, Stonewall Jackson and his legendary "foot-cavalry" conducted their great Valley Campaign which contributed so heavily to the defeat of McClellan's Peninsular Campaign. Driving the disorganized Union armies before him down the Valley, Jackson, late in the month, although momentarily in danger of having his escape route up the Valley Pike cut, determined to demonstrate against Harpers Ferry, a move which would further confuse and consternate the Federal defenders and permit him to safely withdraw his troops and captured supplies.

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1 Barry, 141.

Defeated at Winchester on the 25th, and momentarily expecting Jackson's legions to fall upon his flank or rear, Banks withdrew through Martinsburg and retreated across the Potomac. "There were never more grateful hearts in the same number of men than when at midday of the 26th we stood on the opposite shore."[2] Jackson, meanwhile, established his base at Winchester.

Brig. Gen. Rufus Saxton had been placed in command of Harpers Ferry[3] and now prepared for the expected seige, sending the 111th Pennsylvania and the 1st Maryland Cavalry to Charles Town to outpost the western approach.[4] Despite the threat of advancing enemy columns, Jackson informed an astonished staff that the command would proceed to Harpers Ferry.[5] They thought him "crazy".[6]

On the 28th, Jackson sent Winder's Brigade to Charles Town. Here Saxton's advance units were routed after a skirmish and they retreated the six miles to Bolivar Heights,[7] where Saxton formed a defense line stretching from the Shenandoah to the Potomac and awaited attack.[8] On the 29th Jackson's main force pushed to Halltown, two miles

2 Banks report, Official Records, XII, Part I, 551.

3 Ibid., 639.

4 Ibid.

5 Douglas, Henry Kyd, I Rode with Stonewall, 64.

6 Ibid.

7 Official Records, XII, Part I, 707.

8 Ibid., 639.

from Bolivar Heights, his advance units driving the Federal pickets back to the Bolivar Heights line and further increased the tension by occupying Loudoun Heights, which threatened the Union flank.[9]

That night Saxton withdrew his defense line a short distance eastward, hoping that the shorter inner defense line would be more easily defended by his small command, and that the naval battery on Maryland Heights would be more effectively used against the enemy at the closer range.[10] However, Jackson had received reports that Shields was moving on his right flank, Fremong on his left, with the object of concentrating in the Confederate rear and "cutting of my (Jackson's) retreat up the Valley."[11] The next day (30th) Jackson began his withdrawal; Winder's brigade, bringing up the rear, shelled the Bolivar Heights line before taking up the march on the Charles Town pike.[12]

Harpers Ferry and the Valley area became a quiet sector of the war during the summer of 1862 while Pope failed in late August at the second battle of Bull Run. In early September Lee crossed the Potomac and began his first Northern invasion.[13] The part

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9 Ibid., 639, 707, 738.

10 Ibid., 640. The distance from the naval battery to the crest of Boliver Heights was about 8,000 feet, to the crest of Camp Hill less than half that distance.

11 Ibid., 707.

12 Ibid., 707, 640.

13 ~~Ibidxx~~ It was originally planned to devote a separate part of this study to Harpers Ferry's role in the Antietam Campaign. This later proved impossible, and a brief account substituted.

played by Harpers Ferry in this campaign was its most important of the war, and a more skilled and tenacious defense by its commander might very well have led to the destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Lee, with headquarters at Frederick, faced a trying problem of supply as he contemplated his advance northward into Pennsylvania. A direct line of communication to Culpepper Courthouse would expose it to attack from Washington; instead the Confederate commander determined to supply his army through the Valley of Virginia.[14] This new line would pass within 16 miles of Harpers Ferry, still held by a strong Union garrison. The cutting of this supply route by the Harpers Ferry command would isolate Lee in enemy territory. When it became evident that McClellan was not going to withdraw the garrison at Harpers Ferry, Lee determined to capture it.[15] Since McClellan was well known for his deliberateness it seemed likely there would be sufficient time to reduce the Harpers Ferry bastion before the arrival of the main Union Army. Once the Southern Army's line of communication was clear "dazzling possibilities of manoeuvre would open."[16] Use of the B & O line would again be denied the Federals, a moderate advance of seventy-one miles from Hagerstown would enable Lee to capture Harrisburg and destruction of the Susquehanna Bridge would sever the great Union artery of the Pennsylvania Railroad; the loss of the B & O and

14 Official Records, XIX, Part 2, 601.

15 McClellan had asked permission to relieve the Harpers Ferry garrison but had been overuled by Halleck. IBID., I, 26.

16 R. E. Lee, II, 360.

and Pennsylvania lines would necessitate use of the laborious Great Lakes route between the Union east and west.[17] "After that I can turn my attention to Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Washington, as may seem best for our interests" declared Lee.[18]

To capture Harpers Ferry, Lee decided to divide his army, proceeding with the main body to Hagerstown and dispatching three columns to engage Harpers Ferry.[19] These orders were incorporated in Special Orders No. 191, one of the most famous documents of the Civil War because of the career of one of its copies. For the command of the Harpers Ferry expedition, Lee selected Stonewall Jackson who was familiar with the defenses of the town, having fortified it himself during his service there in the spring of 1861.[20]

It was a dangerous undertaking, one which Longstreet, Lee's other Corps commander, did not favor.[21] Lee explained his reasons for leaving the Union Army on his line of communication while marching into the heart of enemy territory. "He (McClellan)

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17 B and L, II, 605. (?)

18 Ibid.

19 Actually Lee's Army was split into five segments: Jackson to approach Harpers Ferry from the west, Walker to occupy Loudoun Heights, McLaws to occupy Maryland Heights, Longstreet to proceed to Hagerstown, D. H. Hill remaining at Boonsborough to guard the mountain passes.

20 An assignment that brought from Jackson one of his few attempts at humor, remarking that he had neglected "his friends" in the Valley too long. B & L, II, 606.

21 Ibid., 663.

is an able general but a very cautious one.... His army is in a very demoralized and chaotic condition, and will not be prepared for offensive operations--or he will not think it so--for three or four weeks.[22] Before that time I hope to be on the Susquehanna."

The Army moved out from Frederick on September 10th; Lee hoped the capture of Harpers Ferry would be effected on the 12th.[23] As McLaws and Walker cleared Maryland and Loudoun Heights and laid seige to the town with their artillery, Jackson's force would carry the town from the west. Closing all exits simultaneously, the garrison of 11,000 with their valuable supplies and equipment would be taken.

For the defenders of Harpers Ferry, the town itself was difficult, if not impossible to defend; it was a weak, rather than a strong position.[24] Johnston had sized up the tactical picture of Harpers Ferry early in the war: "The position is untenable by any force not strong enough to take the field against an invading army and to hold both sides of the Potomac"--adding that Bolivar Heights, the only defensive position, is "exposed to enfilade and reverse fires of artillery from heights on Maryland side of the river.[25] With any of the three commanding heights--Bolivar, Loudoun

22 Ibid., 606.

23 Official Records, XIX, part 2, 603-4.

24 Ibid., Part 1, 717.

25 Ibid.,

or Maryland--possess by the enemy, Harpers Ferry was untenable. Yet each of these three positions was detached from and not within supporting distance of the others, being separated by great natural boundaries of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Therefore each was a separate command and required fortification. Actually Bolivar and Maryland Heights were only superficially fortified and Loudoun Heights was left unguarded.

McLaws with his own and Anderson's divisions, approached from the North, Kershaw with his own brigade and that of Barksdale, sweeping down along the crest of Maryland Heights, the remainder of the command guarding the flanks.[26] By nightfall on the 12th McLaws faced the Union defense line on Maryland Heights.[27] Jackson's command of three divisions,[28] driving the Union troops from Martinsburg, shortly before noon on the 12th came in sight of the Federal line on Bolivar Heights.[29] Walker's division, crossing the Potomac at Point of Rocks, reached Loudoun Heights on the morning of the 13th by which time the garrison under Col. Dixon Miles was completely cut off.[30]

While behind the time table Lee had set up, Jackson and his staff were ignorant of the dramatic and ominous turn of events

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26 Official Records, XIX, Part 1, 853.

27 Ibid.

28 A.P.Hill's, Ewell's, and Jackson's.

29 Ibid., 953.

30 Ibid., 913.

which had evolved from the chance circumstances surrounding D.H. Hill's copy of Special Orders No. 191. Copies of that document had been made for all division commanders in Lee's Army. D.H. Hill, formerly under Jackson's command was to move with Longstreet. To properly notify him of the transfer, Jackson, intent upon secrecy; copied in his own hand the parts of the order applicable to Hill[31] and sent it to this officer who carefully put it away.[32]

The other copy directed to Hill was not so cautiously handled. On September 13th, as Jackson's forces began their seige of Harpers Ferry, this copy, wrapped around three cigars, was picked up by two members of the 27th Indiana, in a field where the Union Army was bivouaced at Frederick.[33] Immediately the find was rushed through channels to the commanding general; McClellan now had the complete plans of Lee's great gamble. In one day's march he could place his army squarely between the divided portions of Lee's army. "Few generals in history have had a greater piece of fortune than that which had befallen George McClellan."[34]

But the opportunity was not realized. McClellan did not put his forces in motion until the 14th. While in his memoirs he

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31 He omitted the first (two) paragraphs

32 Lee's Lieutenants, II, 161.

33 Catton, Bruce, Mr. Lincoln's Army, Garden City, 1951, 217-8.

34 Williams, Kenneth P., Lincoln Finds A General, 371.

declares that on receiving the captured dispatch "I immediately gave orders for a rapid and vigorous movement forward",[35] it would seem that McClellan lost twelve to eighteen precious hours which might have enabled him to break up Lee's army by not dispatching his columns instantly upon receipt of the Lost Order but instead waiting until the following morning.[36]

Franklin's VI Corps march toward Harpers Ferry on the morning of the 14th with orders to cut off McLaws retreat. But time was the priceless factor now; already the town was invested and surrender was inevitable. The question in the mind of both Lee and McClellan was "How long will the garrison hold out against Jackson?" If it could hold until Franklin's Corps arrived,

35 McClellan, George B., McClellan's Own Story, 572.

36 It is not known exactly when McClellan received the order on the 13th. Williams (I, 375) declares it was "near noon;" Catton (222) suggests it was shortly before noon; Freeman (Lee's Lieutenants, II, 174) believes it to be "about 2 P.M." In McClellan's orders to Franklin for the movement, dated "September 13, 1862--6.20 p.m." he told that officer that "I now have full information as to the movements and intentions of the enemy." Official Records, XIX, Part 1, 45.

McLaws, who had by now driven the Union defenders off of Maryland Heights,[37] would be penned up in Pleasant Valley, and Jackson would be forced to seek a juncture with the main body of the Confederate Army--which McClellan's main body was at the moment seeking to prevent.

The crisis was reached on the evening of the 14th when Franklin's Corps pushed through Crampton's Gap five miles north of Harpers Ferry, and that night Confederate remnants set up a defense line across Pleasant Valley and awaited the brunt of Franklin's attack next morning which would have cut off McLaws and raised the seige of Harpers Ferry.

Of the developments following McClellan's advance from Frederick, Col. Miles commanding at Harpers Ferry knew nothing. On the evening of the 14th he sent a last message by courier to McClellan, advising the garrison could hold out only for forty-eight hours and must then surrender, unless relieved.[38] McClellan received the message and sent three couriers to Miles ordering him to "hold out to the last", butthere is no record of the message getting through.[39]

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37 The action was accomplished by 4:30 p.m. on the 13th. Official Records, XIX, part 1, 853-4. The somewhat precipitous withdrawal of Col. Thomas Ford's command from Maryland Heights, the key to the defense of Harpers Ferry, played an important role in the proceedings of the Commission later named to investigate the circumstances of the surrender.

38 Somewhat desperately, Miles ordered the messenger to relay this information to someone who might have "heard of the United States Army, or any general of the United States Army, or anybody that knew anything about the United States Army." Official Records, XIX, part 1,720

39 Ibid., 45.

Miles faced what appeared to be a hopeless situation as he awaited Jackson's final assault at dawn on the 15th. The plunging fire from batteries on Maryland and Loudoun Heights took his defense line along Bolivar Heights in the rear. Jackson had moved his artillery during the night so as to enfilade the Bolivar Heights line.[40] At points Jackson's artillery was only 400 yards from the Union defenses.[41] During the cannonading preceding the expected assault, Miles' artillery officers notified him their ammunition was exhausted, convincing him that further resistance would be hopeless.[42] As Franklin shortly after dawn prepared for the assault against McLaws in Pleasant Valley that would have turned the tide against Lee's Maryland invasion, the artillery fire, clearly resounding from Harpers Ferry, suddenly ceased. Harpers Ferry had surrendered.[43]

Immediately upon receiving the surrender of the garrison, Jackson began sending his units northward to rejoin the main body of the Confederate Army at Antietam Creek. Many of the troops marched through the night, falling exhausted into immediate sleep upon reaching Lee's position.

40 Ibid., Part 1, 743.
41 Ibid., 980.
42 Ibid., 548
43 Probably the most accurate account of the number of prisoners captured by the Confederates is in Moore, Frank, Rebellion Record, listing 11,583. As an indication of the relatively little fighting which took place during the seige, the number of killed and wounded for the Federals was put at 217. Official Records, IX, part 1,54

When McClellan launched his attack on the 17th, all of Jackson's command had united with Lee's main force except A.P.Hill's Division which was supervising the collection of supplies and parole of the 11,000 prisoners at Harpers Ferry. A drawn battle, the Army of Northern Virginia was saved from defeat and possible catastrophe only by the timely arrival of Hill late in the day, after a sixteen-mile forced march from the Ferry. Hill's fortunate arrival emphasized the success which the Federal Army might have won, had Miles been able to delay the juncture of the Confederates, even for a half day.[44]

44 So painful was this fact that the War Department ordered a Military Commission to investigate the circumstances attending to the capitulation. Col. Miles had been killed, he therefore became the general scapegoat, the Commission declaring that his "incapacity, amounting to almost imbecility, led to the shameful surrender of this important post." Ibid., 799. The "Record of the Harper's Ferry Military Commission" covers pages 549 through 800 in Official Records, XIX, part 1.

CHAPTER VIII

Harpers Ferry suffered remarkably little damage as a result of Jackson's siege, less than from other minor raids during the war.[1] This phenomenon can be explained because of the total lack of fighting in the town itself—actually most of the infantry action took place on Maryland Heights, with some action on the west slope and approaches of Bolivar Heights.

Confederate artillery on Maryland and Loudoun Heights, which could have battered the town severely, zeroed in chiefly on the Bolivar Heights defense line, with relatively few rounds directed into the town. There was no loss of life among the citizenry, and few reports of damage to civilian property.[2]

The behavior of the Confederate artillery ammunition contributed somewhat to the town's protection. Plagued with an unusually defective supply of shells, the Confederate gunners watched the rounds fail to burst, burst prematurely, or explode dangerously near the muzzle. The overall effect upon the Union garrison from the guns on Maryland and Loudoun Heights "was more moral than physical."[3]

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1 Barry, 144.

2 Ibid. But there is little doubt that most of the townspeople "skedaddled" during the festivities.

3 Alexander, E. P., The American Civil War, 235. (London, 1908)

A number of the public buildings served as hospitals during the engagement, and it was during this episode of the war that the stone steps leading up to the Harper House received the name "Bloody Steps", from being covered with the blood of wounded men carried up the steps to the improvised hospital in the Catholic Church--according to local legend.[4]

Following by now standard operating procedure, the Confederates had destroyed all bridges and rolling staff in their reach, with most of the road for thirty-five miles east of Harpers Ferry receiving their attention.[5]

As the Confederates retired from Harpers Ferry following the Antietam battle, they burned both the railroad and pontoon bridges across the Potomac and advance elements of the Army of the Potomac had to wade across the shallow water.[6] On September 20th, Maryland Heights was occupied by Gen. A. S. Williams' 12th Corps; two days later Gen. E. V. Sumner took possession of Harpers Ferry and established his headquarters on Bolivar Heights.[7]

For the next month the vicinity of Harpers Ferry was host to the largest group of soldiery of the war. Gen. McClellan outfitting and reorganizing his command, bivouacked the Army of the

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4 Total Union killed and wounded, 217. Official Records, IX, Part 1, 549.

5 Summers, 119.

6 Wade, 117.

7 Official Records, XIX, Part 1, 69; Walker, Francis, History of the Second Army Corps, 128.

Potomac in and about Harpers Ferry and towards Sharpsburg as he prepared once again for another "On to Richmond" campaign.

It provided a great spectacle for the townspeople who had remained in the town.[8]

> The whole peninsula formed by the Potomac and the Shenandoah...as well as the surrounding heights, soon became dotted with tents, and at night the two villages and the neighboring hills were aglow with hundreds of watch fires. From Camp Hill the ridge that separates the towns of Harper's Ferry and Bolivar the spectacle was magnificent, especially at night....A hum of voices like that of an immense city or the hoarse murmur of the great deep arose from the valleys on either side and filled the air with a confusion of sounds.... The bands of the various regiments frequently discoursed their martial strains, and nothing that sight or sound could do to stir the imagination was wanted.

The stirring panoply of tents from Sharpsburg to Harpers Ferry inspired a more lasting observation from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States. President Lincoln, fearing that McClellan would again go into winter quarters without fighting as he had the winter before, decided to visit his commanding general and determine his future plans. The President arrived in Harpers Ferry on October 1st and spent several days reviewing the troops and going over the battlefields of Harpers Ferry, South Mountain, and Antietam.[9] One morning, rising early from a tent assigned to him in the great tented city, now quiet in the halflight just before

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8 Barry, 145-6.

9 McClellan, 627.

dawn, Lincoln walked silently through the streets. "What is all this?" he asked his companion. To the startled answer that it was the Army of the Potomac, Mr. Lincoln sadly declared "No. This is General McClellan's bodyguard."[10]

A few days after Lincoln's departure, and adding to the discomfiture of those who felt McClellan had permitted Lee to slip away from him at Antietam, Jeb Stuart's Confederate cavalry accomplished their second "ride around the army," beginning and ending near Harpers Ferry. This "October Raid" began at "The Bower," about twenty miles west of Harpers Ferry, and after reaching Chambersburg passed the left flank of the Union Army, crossing the Potomac about thirty miles below Harpers Ferry.

During their sojourn at Harpers Ferry following the Antietam Campaign, the Federal soldiers did not, apparently, startle the residents with unusual conduct, for their compile philosophically reports that "of course, innumerable instances occurred of drunken rioting amony the soldiers and of outrages on the citizens."[11]

As his command regrouped along the Potomac, Gen. McClellan determined to fortify the heights surrounding Harpers Ferry "in order to avoid a similar catastrophe to the one which happened to Col.Miles."[12]

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10 Sandburg, Carl, Abraham Lincoln the War Years, I, 595.

11 Barry, 146.

12 Official Records, XIX, part 2, 360.

A survey was conducted by the Army Engineers with the idea of erecting fortifications which would (1) prevent the enemy in the future from crossing into Maryland; (2) guard the bridges which control the debouch into the Valley of Virginia; and (3) protect the line of the B & O.[13] While McClellan's engineers envisaged an elaborate system of stone blockhouses and gun emplacements and permanent bridges across both the Potomac and Shenandoah.[14] Halleck decided such a plan would be too expensive and require too long a delay and that an interior line of operations east of the Blue Ridge could reach the military objectives in Virginia and at the same time cover Washington.[15]

Instead field defenses with moderate garrisons were agreed upon. Soldiers found foraging or straggling in the countryside during the Union Army's stay were picked up and sent to Harpers Ferry to fell trees and work on the trenches for punishment.[16]

Actually very minor defensive works had been constructed to protect Harpers Ferry previous to its seige and capture in September, 1862. Beginning with McClellan's efforts described above, the bastioning of the heights was continued through the winter and spring of the following year. It was during this time that the "Stone Fort" on Maryland Heights was constructed, a structure of dry

13 Ibid., 441

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 443

16 Cuffel, Charles A., Durell's Battery In The Civil War, 86-7.

masonry 100' x 40', the wall being from four and one half to seven feet in thickness.[17] It was also at this time that the so-called "Barnard Line", named for Gen. John G. Barnard, Chief of Engineers, was constructed, linking Fort Duncan with the Stone Fort. It was decided then that previous defenses had envisaged an attack from the south, while the most feasible point of attack was from the north. The "Barnard Line", completed by the summer of 1863, constituted the Union defense of Harpers Ferry from the north for the remainder of the war and was constituted as follows.[18]

On the summit of a knoll at the bend of the Potomac, about a mile and a half above its junction with the Shenandoah, was the redoubt of Fort Duncan, a rectangle of earthen walls, about 300' x 100'.[19] Some 250 feet to the south of Fort Duncan was a gun battery. From Fort Duncan to the Stone Fort on Maryland Heights was constructed a system of defenses consisting of rifle pits and three batteries, one near Duncan, one on the crest between the extremities of the line and one at the foot of Maryland Heights ridge, all covering this approach to the Potomac from the region of Sharpsburg.

On Maryland Heights, about one mile from the Potomac, at the highest point of the ridge in that vicinity, a double line of

17 Official Records, XXVII, Part 2, 14.

18 The ensuing description of the Maryland Heights defense line is found in the report of Col. W. I. Raynolds, Official Records, XXVII, Part 2, 13-16.

19 The walls of this Fort are well preserved, although outside the park limits.

rifle pits extended across the crest and down the west face, the east face being a steep 100 foot drop. Between the rifle pits was Square Fort. A battery was placed behind the first line of rifle pits, which was raised about ten feet, being mounted en embrasure. About 600 yards south of the Stone Fort, at a narrow point on the crest, a 100-pound Dahlgren from the naval battery was mounted which had a 360° field of fire covering Maryland Heights from all directions as well as Loudoun and Bolivar Heights. All timber within 1,500 yards of the Maryland Heights line was cut down to give an unobstructed field of fire for the defenders.

Improvements in the Bolivar Heights line were also affected. A battery position was constructed just north of the Charles Town turnpike on the crest of the ridge, protecting the approach from the west. A trench line ran along the crest from the Charles Town road northward to the Potomac. South of the road three separate trench lines, the southermost containing a battery, were constructed to protect the ravines and gullies which offered passageway around the left of the line.

On Loudoun Heights a small stone fort and a series of stone rifle pits were constructed, principally to prevent occupation of this position by enemy forces.[20]

20 A memorandum dated May 5th, 1863, prepared for Col. Rayholds by Gen. Barnard contains a full description of the defenses along with sketches and recommendations for completion of the works. Found in Official Records, XXV, part 2, 424-8.

After repeated urgings from the War Department during October, McClellan finally put the Army of the Potomac in motion and during the last days of October and early November Harpers Ferry witnessed the long lines of blue passing through the town on the way south. The crossing of this great host across the Potomac River pontoon bridge at Harpers Ferry presented "a moving picture of the magnificent army of nearly one hundred thousand men in motion, engaged in the opening demonstration of another campaign"[21]

Coming off the bridge into the armory yard the soldiers saw great piles of debris which had been taken from the buildings after the fire. Passing by the engine house many of the regiments sang "John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave, as we go marching on."[22]

Tramping down Shenandoah Street to Bridge Street, the Union Army crossed the Shenandoah River pontoon bridge, passed around the base of Loudoun Heights and headed up the Valley for another meeting with the Army of Northern Virginia.[23] Gen. B. F. Kelley, headquarters at Harpers Ferry, was put in command of the Harpers Ferry area.[24] Harpers Ferry was to remain in Union hands

21 Under the Maltese Cross, 86.

22 Ibid.

23 Walker 131; Mulholland, 39.

24 Official Records, XXV, part 2, 12.

without interruption until Lee's next venture north of the Potomac during the Gettysburg campaign the following summer.[25]

With the main theater of operations shifting to the southeast, the vicinity of Harpers Ferry became a quiet zone, the customary cavalry skirmishes and exchange of rifle salutations between pickets no longer constituting a typical day. Even the Loudoun Rangers went into winter quarters near Brunswick and reported little activity.[26]

In June, 1863, Lee began his last and greatest attempt to carry the war into the North. Explaining his reasoning for this movement, the Confederate commander indicated the importance he placed upon the Union strong point in the Valley of Virginia. "The execution of this purpose (the invasion) embraced the relief of the Shenandoah Valley from the troops that had occupied the lower part of it during the winter and spring, and, if practicable, the transfer of the scene of hostilities north of the Potomac."[27]

In this invasion, as in the one the preceding autumn, Harpers Ferry, the key to the lower Valley, was to play a decisive role. General-in-Chief Halleck, who had so tenaciously refused to permit McClellan to evacuate Harpers Ferry and use the garrison

25 Barry, 146.

26 Goodhart, 80.

27 Official Records, XXVII, Part 2, 305.

to reinforce his army during the 1862 campaign in Maryland, came into conflict with Hooker over the same problem during the Gettysburg campaign. This time it was to result in the resignation of the commander of the Army of the Potomac.

As Hooker watched Lee break camp and begin his march, he was confronted with the problem of forming a plan for meeting the Confederate advance. What were his commitments? In his dispatch to President Lincoln he noted that Halleck's previous instructions to him were to keep "in view always the importance of covering Washington and Harper's Ferry, either directly or by so operating as to be able to punish any force of the enemy sent against them."[28]

In his reply of June 5th Halleck emphasized the necessity of protecting Washington and Harpers Ferry, neither of which "could long hold out against a large force."[29] Meanwhile Milroy, at Winchester, was almost cut off by Ewell's Corps advancing up the Valley and only a small part of the command escaped to Harpers Ferry, which Ewell's move threatened to isolate.[30]

Incensed by Milroy's debacle at Winchester and fearing the loss of Harpers Ferry, Halleck wired Gen. Robert C. Schenck,

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28 Ibid., Part 1, 30.

29 Ibid., 32.

30 Ibid., 45.

commanding at Baltimore: "Do not give General Milroy any command at Harper's Ferry. We have had enough of that sort of military genius. If you have not already done so, send all your small posts and available troops there. That place (Harpers Ferry) must be held."[31]

Receiving word of this at Fairfax Station on June 16th, Hooker put his army in motion before dawn next morning to prevent the loss of Harpers Ferry.[32] But Halleck had given no order for Hooker to send the entire Army of the Potomac to Harpers Ferry, only a smaller force to find the enemy's position, of which Washington was ill-advised at the time; and now he ordered Hooker to keep the remainder of his army well in hand to be dispatched as events might demand.[33]

A succession of unreliable and contradictory reports followed concerning the situation at Harpers Ferry.[34] Hooker was notified that although Gen. Tyler, commanding at Harpers Ferry, had evacuated the town and fortified himself on Maryland Heights, no advance of the enemy on Harpers Ferry had yet been reported. Hooker then determined to abandon the idea of forced marches to reach Harpers Ferry, and to proceed cautiously.[35]

31 Official Records, XXVII, pt. 3, 124.

32 Ibid., 46.

33 Ibid., 47.

34 Ibid., 48, 49.

35 Ibid., 49.

On June 24th, Gen. G. K. Warren, Hooker's Chief of Engineers, presented him with a report, stating six reasons why the entire army should be moved at once to the neighborhood of Harpers Ferry. Warren's strategy was a defensive one "based upon the idea that we are not to try and go round his army, and drive it out of Maryland, as we did last year, but to paralyze all its movements by threatening its flank and rear if it advances, and gain time to collect reenforcements sufficient to render us the stronger army of the two."[36] The next day the Army of the Potomac crossed the river at Edwards Ferry and marched toward Frederick, Hooker establishing his headquarters there on the 27th.[37]

The Confederates advancing toward Pennsylvania were equally disturbed as to enemy dispositions at Harpers Ferry and on June 25th, the day before Lee and Hooker crossed the Potomac some forty miles apart, the 12th Virginia Cavalry, Lt. Col. Massie, established a picket line fronting Bolivar Heights to check upon the movement and disposition of Federal troops in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry,[38] which had withdrawn to Maryland Heights, leaving a holding force in the town.

On the 26th Hooker wired for permission to remove public stores and evacuate the troops from Maryland Heights, pointing out to Halleck, "It must be born in mind that I am here with a force

36 Ibid., Part 3, 292.

37 The complete itinerary of the Army of the Potomac June 5th to July 31st is found in Ibid., Part 1, 140-50.

38 Ibid., Part 2, 766.

inferior in numbers to that of the enemy, and must have every available man to use in the field." Hooker than informed the General-in-Chief of the exact strength of the army in order that "There may not be expected of me more than I have material to do with."[39]

Halleck's reply was explicit: "Maryland Heights have always been regarded as an important point to be held up by us, and much expense and labor incurred in fortifying them. I cannot approve their abandonment, except in case of absolute necessity."[40]

Hooker, receiving this message at Harpers Ferry, dispatched an immediate reply which left no doubt as to his estimate of Halleck's strategy and boldly suggested that the matter be referred higher for decision--to Secretary of War Stanton and Commander-in-Chief Lincoln.

> I have received your telegram in regard to Harper's Ferry. I find 10,000 men here, in condition to take the field. Here they are of no earthly account. They cannot defend a ford in the river, and, as far as Harper's Ferry is concerned, there is nothing of it. As for the fortifications, the work of the troops, they remain when the troops are withdrawn. No enemy will ever take possession of them for them. This is my opinion. All the public property could have been secured to-night, and the troops marched to where they could have been of some service. Now they are but a bait for the rebels, should they return.
>
> I beg that this may be presented to the Secretary of War and His Excellency the President.[41]

39 Ibid., Part 1, 59. Hooker had travelled from Frederick to Harpers Ferry on the 27th to personally inspect its defenses. Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 60.

The last sentence of the dispatch might be interpreted as a considered effort on the part of a subordinate officer to bring a vexing question into "high level" discussion in order that full investigation might result in the best possible solution--it might also be considered as a bit of rather flagrant insubordination, especially in light of communications between Hooker and Washington.

It is no doubt partially true that there were three military commanders in Washington at this time--Halleck, Stanton, and Lincoln. Hooker had formed the habit of communicating with Lincoln directly over matters of information and orders for his army, although these dispatches were turned over to Halleck for answer. That Hooker was not satisfied with his relations with Halleck was quite evident in his dispatch to Lincoln on the 16th.

> You have long been aware, Mr. President, that I have not enjoyed the confidence of the major-general commanding the army, and I can assure you so long as this continues we may look in vain for success, especially as future operations will require our relations to be more dependent upon each other than heretofore.[42]

Lincoln's reply was curt and concise, and left Hooker under no misapprehension as to his military position. "To remove all misunderstanding, I now place you in the strict military

42 Ibid., 45

relation to General Halleck of a commander of one of the armies to the general-in-chief of all the armies. I have not intended differently, but as it seems to be differently understook, I shall direct him to give you orders and you to obey them."[43]

General Hooker's intention in writing the dispatch of the 27th, asking, if not demanding, a change of policy in respect to Harpers Ferry, is difficult to fathom. For five minutes after receiving this communication on the 27th, Halleck received the following:

> My original instructions require me to cover Harper's Ferry and Washington. I have now imposed upon me, in addition, an enemy in my front of more than my number. I beg to be understood, respectfully, but firmly, that I am unable to comply with this condition with the means at my disposal, and earnestly request that I may at once be relieved from the position I occupy.[44]

Before dawn next morning a messenger from Washington awoke Gen. George Gordon Meade near Frederick and bestowed upon him command of the Army of the Potomac, just three days before Buford's cavalry pickets opened fire on Lee's advance at Gettysburg.[45]

The question as to the military soundness of Halleck's position on Holding Harpers Ferry is a contentious one.[46] Equally

43 Ibid., 47.

44 Ibid., 60.

45 For an account of the Washington end of Hooker's dismissal, see B & L III, 239-43 "Hooker's Appointment and Removal," by Charles F. Benjamin.

46 Williams, Kenneth P., Lincoln Finds a General, II, 647-50; Randall, J.G., Lincoln The President, II, 272.

perplexing is the possible inference to be drawn from Hooker's request to be relieved. His two dispatches of the 27th--one asking for a change in policy on Harpers Ferry, the other asking to be relieved--were received in Washington only five minutes apart. Did he intend to force Halleck and Lincoln, by threat of resignation to permit evacuation of Harpers Ferry? Whether it was an unsuccessful attempt to bluff, or whether Hooker actually wished to be relieved, preferring this to conducting a campaign whose tactics were forced upon him is an unsolved puzzle. Nicolay and Hay, who must have known the inside of the controversy commented that "It will always be impossible to say whether General Hooker intended to be taken at his word."[47]

Until Hooker's replacement, the garrison at Harpers Ferry had prepared for an all-out defense. Gen. Daniel Tyler had taken command of the post on June 15th at which time its strength was 3100 men, and he immediately began preparations to prevent its capture.[48] Under the direction of Col. W. F. Raynolds defenses were rushed to completion and more troops were sent by Hooker to fill out Tyler's command. On June 26th Tyler, with 10,500 effectives, telegraphed to Stanton "I can hold Maryland Heights."[49] It would

47 Nicolay, John G., and Hay, John, Abraham Lincoln: A History VII, 226.

48 Official Records, XXVII, Part 2, 19.

49 Ibid., 31. The same day Maj. Gen. William H. French replaced Tyler at Harpers Ferry.

seem that with Meade replacing Hooker, the strategically important position at Harpers Ferry would and could be held. A threat to Lee's communication line into the Shenandoah Valley, Harpers Ferry's garrison was a possible weapon to embarrass the Confederate Army when it attempted to withdraw across the Potomac. It was likely that Harpers Ferry was to play a significant role in the Gettysburg Campaign.

CHAPTER IX

With the order which placed him in command of the Army of the Potomac, Meade received a letter of instructions from Halleck which declared "Harper's Ferry and its garrison are under your direct orders."[1] While Meade wished to hold Harpers Ferry as a debouche[2] into the Cumberland Valley, he wired Halleck at 1:00 p.m. on the 28th "Am I permitted, under existing circumstances, to withdraw a portion of the garrison of Harper's Ferry, providing I leave sufficient force to hold Maryland Heights against a coup de main?"[3]

That Meade was to operate in a somewhat different relationship to his General-in-Chief was indicated by Halleck's prompt answer. "The garrison at Harper's Ferry is under your orders. You can diminish or increase it as you think the circumstances justify."[4] It was a somewhat startling reversal of form--even for Halleck.[5]

A few hours later Meade asked French "What number of men do you consider sufficient to hold the Heights against any coup de main"[6] and that evening (the 29th) French replied "Five thousand reliable men could make a practicable defense. I do not consider the force here stronger than that."[7]

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1 Official Records, XXVII, part 1, 61.

2 Ibid., 21.

3 Ibid., 62.

4 Ibid., 63.

5 Perhaps Meade had ingratiated himself with Halleck by generous use of French terms in his reports, "Old Brains" having won some prominence through his translations of French military classics.

6 Ibid., Part 3, 378.

7 Ibid., 382.

Still later that night French received orders from Meade to move with his main body to occupy Frederick and the line of the B & O and with the balance of his force "to remove and escort the public property to Washington," which was done, the evacuation beginning on the night of the 29th.[8] Meade had, the first day of his occupancy of Hooker's old post, done the very thing which had cost his predecessor his command.

Meade's evacuation of Harpers Ferry is one of the many debatable actions of the Gettysburg Campaign.[9] The value of holding this position became evident during Lee's retreat from Pennsylvania. Having reached the Potomac at Williamsport, and found it unfordable, the Confederate Chief was able to erect strong defenses on the north bank which held off the Federals until he was able to cross. But had French remained with his troops at Harpers Ferry, holding the south bank of the Potomac and contesting Lee's crossing, the Confederate Army, with Meade's force at its rear, might have been placed in a position which Gen. Lee would have contemplated only with the most painful of emotions.

There is also the problem as to why Meade ordered the position evacuated. In writing his annual report as General-in-Chief, Halleck observed:

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8 Ibid., Part 1, 114,488.

9 See Williams, II, 740.

10 Official Records, XXVII, Part 1, 20.

> Our force at Harper's Ferry at this time was supposed to be about 11,000. It was incorrectly represented to be destitute of provisions, and that he /Meade/ must immediately supply it, or order the abandonment of the place. Accordingly, a few hours after he assumed the command, he assented to an order, drawn up by an officer of General Hooker's staff, directing General French to send 7,000 estimated at 4,000, to remove and escort the public property to Washington. This order, based upon erroneous representations, was not known in Washington until too late to be countermanded. It was, however, not entirely executed when General Meade very judiciously directed the reoccupation of that important point.

This statement somewhat saddened Gen. Daniel Butterfield, who was the officer referred to who had drawn up the order it was declared based on erroneous representations. Butterfield's communication to Meade reviewed the former's recommendations concerning the Harpers Ferry withdrawal, while attempting to find whether Meade had placed the responsibility on his (Butterfield's) shoulders.

Butterfield's review of the reasons which suggested evacuation were these: Lee was supposed to have 91,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry; that without the Harpers Ferry garrison Meade's Army would be outnumbered; having received permission to use the troops at Harpers Ferry as he wished, Meade would be responsible for not making use of them in the event of failure and in case of failure they would necessarily be ordered away from Harpers Ferry immediately, in case of success they could be returned at once. And furthermore the garrison had an abundance of supplies of which Meade was informed by Butterfield.[11]

11 Ibid., 20.

Meade's answer must have given Butterfield scant comfort. Meade recalled that after the Battle of Gettysburg he had told Halleck that he had favored leaving the garrison at Harpers Ferry "intact." While considering it of no importance as a river crossing, he considered it important as a debouche into the Cumberland Valley but that after much discussion he had yielded to Butterfield's arguments and ordered 7,000 men to Frederick to guard the B & O line, the remaining 4,000 to garrison Maryland Heights. And that furthermore Butterfield had informed Meade the supply of subsistence stores was limited which, along with the difficulty of protection the C & O canal and the B & O Railroad prompted Meade to order abandonment of the Harpers Ferry position. Regretfully but necessarily Meade was constrained to add that his recollection on these matters was "clear and distinct."[12]

Immediately upon the repulse of Longstreet's final assault at Gettysburg on July 3rd, Meade ordered Gen. French, whose troops were protecting the communication line between Frederick and Washington, to re-occupy Harpers Ferry and harass the Confederate retreat.[13] French sent 4,000 men to occupy and hold South Mountain and Crampton's Gap, five miles north of Harpers Ferry.[14] The Confederates had con-

12 Ibid., 21.

13 Ibid., Part 3, 501.

14 Ibid., Part 1, 489.

structed a flooring for the B & O railroad bridge at Harpers Ferry during their occupation and advance detachments of Lee's Army were using this bridge to cross the Potomac into Virginia. On July 5th Union forces destroyed the trestle-work on each side of the bridge as well as the bridge over the canal.[15]

While the destruction of this bridge may have disrupted somewhat Lee's plans to cross the Potomac, it inconvenienced the Federal pursuit even more. With the loss of this crossing, Meade's force was unable to reach the unguarded south bank of the Potomac, consequently the attempt to prevent Lee's crossing had to be made from the north bank, which was eventually thwarted by Lee's strong position at Williamsport.[16] Haupt had anticipated this development on July 4th when he warned Halleck that "A good force on the line of the Potomac to prevent Lee from crossing would, I think, insure his destruction."[17]

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15 Ibid.

16 Williams, II, 740, argues that the "great folly" of abandoning Maryland Heights, the "short-sightedness" of Hooker's idea and "soundness" of Halleck's position on the disposition of the Harpers Ferry garrison during the Gettysburg Campaign was proved by Lee's successful retreat. With the south bank of the Potomac unguarded French, had he remained at Harpers Ferry, could have held the south bank of the river and "Lee's destruction should have followed."

17 Haupt, Herman, Reminiscences of the Civil War, 221.

As Lee waited for the river to fall at Williamsport, Union forces were collecting opposite Harpers Ferry, and bridging materials were being rushed from Washington.[18] On July 10th the Confederates still held the town and that day Meade notified President Garett of the B & O that he was unable to occupy Harpers Ferry and that it would be best not to attempt to rebuild the bridges for the present.[19]

On the 14th, the day after Lee crossed at Williamsport, a pontoon bridge was thrown across the Potomac at Harpers Ferry and Union troops occupied the town and Bolivar Heights.[20] Col. J. Irvin Gregg's Brigade of Cavalry crossed the pontoon bridge at 5:00 P.M., claiming for themselves the honor of being the first troops across the Potomac after the Gettysburg Campaign.[21] The First Connecticut Cavalry moved out from Harpers Ferry as a reconnaissance force that afternoon, and engaged the Confederate rearguard, losing their commander Maj. Farnsworth, and twenty four men.[22] This action was the result of Gen. Gregg's movement to cut Lee's communication with Winchester, but on receiving word that Lee's entire army had crossed the Potomac, Gregg gave up the attempt and directed his movement to Lee's rear.[23]

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18 Official Records, XXVII, Part 3, 618, 628.

19 Ibid., 632, 633.

20 Ibid., 680, 691.

21 Preston, M. D., History of Tenth Regiment of Cavalry New York State Volunteers, 131.

22 Official Records, XXVII, Part 2, 204, 205.

23 ~~Summers, xxx122x~~ Ibid., Part 1, 959.

During Lee's invasion the Confederate Army had demolished every important bridge between Harpers Ferry and Cumberland.[24] The only one spared by them, the railroad bridge at Harpers Ferry, was

24 Summers, 122.

destroyed by Union troops to prevent their escape. This long bridge of the B & O at Harpers Ferry had had a hectic career during the first two years of the war.

First destroyed by Johnston on the Confederate evacuation of Harpers Ferry in June, 1861, attempts to rebuild had been unsuccessful until March, 1862. Washed away April 22nd, a new one was erected which lasted only until June 7th when it was collapsed by high water. A new trestle bridge was immediately built, later that summer replaced by an iron structure. The latter was blown on September 24th, 1862, by Lee following his retreat from Antietam Creek, bringing east-west traffic to a halt again, the fourth destruction of the bridge in fifteen months.[25] Somewhat disturbed by the endless and expensive repair work at Harpers Ferry, President Garett of the B & O reminded McClellan of the losses suffered by the road and the cost of erecting another iron bridge, inquiring rather bluntly "Do you think the prospects of permanent military protection at this point are sufficiently favorable to justify us in again incurring this large expenditure."[26] By April of 1863 the new bridge was finished, inspiring the B & O's Chronicler to rhapsodize, "Damaging and pillaging and rebuilding. Faith never lost. Nor heart."[27] According to tradition, as reported by Harpers

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25 See Williams, II, 840.

26 Official Records, XXXVII, 520. (Part?)

27 Hungerford, II, 24.

Ferry's venerable historian, the bridge was destroyed and rebuilt nine times during the Civil War.[28]

Following the Union re-occupation of Harpers Ferry after the Gettysburg Campaign the Union engineers shortly completed repairs on the railroad bridge.[29] From this time until Early's raid the following year, the Union Army occupied Harpers Ferry without interruption.

By now the civilian population which remained in Harpers Ferry had become accustomed to the tides of war which ebbed and flowed about the town. A pattern of response had developed through the early years of the war, by which civilians sought refuge during these occupations and evacuations of Harpers Ferry. A resident describes a typical seizure of the town during a Confederate raid.[30]

A few days before the arrival of advancing troops, rumors would scatter through the town of impending danger; the news would be relayed especially by Confederate sympathizers who would generally have communication with the Southern column. Finally a travel-worn crown of fugitives would straggle into Harpers Ferry by way of the Charles Town turnpike, either ankle deep in mud or covered with dust. Sharing food, and generally good humor, and joined at Harpers Ferry by many citizens who chose to escape the occupation, the

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28 Barry, 160. The difficulty in determining the number of times the bridge was "rebuilt" lies in defining the difference between being damaged and destroyed.

29 Official Records, XXVII, Part 3, 697.

30 Barry, 160-2.

unorganized group would cross the Potomac bridge and head for "Uncle Leilic's" hotel in Frederick, the unofficial headquarters for fugitives on these occasions. Here the transients would remain, exchanging news and gossip until danger passed and the Confederates retreated up the Valley, at which time they would return hoping that no more than minor damage had been suffered by their homes and farms. Soon these festivities became known as "Skedaddles."

The last Confederate occupation and the last occasion for one of Harpers Ferry's "Skedaddles" took place during Gen. Jubal Early's raid on Washington in July, 1864, as Grant was hammering Lee's Army before Richmond. Early's orders from Lee were to drive from the Valley the army of Gen. Hunter which was threatening Lynchburg and "by threatening Washington and Baltimore General Grant would be compelled either to weaken himself so much for their protection as to afford us an opportunity to attack him, or that he might be induced to attack us."[31]

Moving down the Valley, Early reached Winchester on July 2nd and moved on Harpers Ferry. "My desire had been to manoeuvre [sic] the enemy out of Maryland Heights, so as to enable me to move directly from Harper's Ferry for Washington."[32] The following

31 Official Records, XXXVII, Part 1, 346.

32 Early, Jubal, A., Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States, 385.

day the Union troops were driven back from Shepherdstown and into Harpers Ferry, joining Gen. Max Weber who was in command at Harpers Ferry.[33]

On July 4th Early's advance guard of 2,000 attacked the Federals at Bolivar Heights, driving the Union pickets to the line of rifle pits on Camp Hill, which passed along the ridge now occupied by Storer College. As Quartermaster and commissary supplies were hurriedly sent across the Potomac to Safety at Sandy Hook, the Union troops held off the Confederates the remainder of the day.[34] About 6:30 P.M. Weber withdrew from Harpers Ferry, burning the railroad and pontoon bridges across the Potomac and retired to the fortified positions on the north bank of the Potomac and on Maryland Heights.[35]

A lamentable number of civilians were hit by stray shots during this skirmish in Harpers Ferry. A lady standing on lower Shenandoah Street was killed by a sharpshooter on Maryland Heights, and a colored woman was killed near the same location. During the fighting through Bolivar a child was mortally wounded. A number of other civilians were injured and many buildings struck by random

33 Official Records, XXXVII, Part 1, 175.

34 Ibid., 185-6.

35 Ibid., 176; Early, 384.

fire.[36] This was probably the largest loss of civilian life by Harpers Ferry during the war.

While holding the town for several days, the Confederates showed very few troops in Harpers Ferry during their occupation, keeping their outposts well out of sight and establishing a line of sharpshooters along the Potomac River to engage the Federal snipers.[37] Most of the Confederate force threatening Harpers Ferry was located to the north, between Maryland Heights and Antietam Creek.[38] Early felt it was not wise to send his men into the town, except as skirmishers, because it was thoroughly commanded by the heavy batteries on Maryland Heights.[39]

Confederate troops which had been observed from the Maryland Heights signal station massing to the north, gave indication that an attack might be launched against the Barnard Line stretching from Maryland Heights to Fort Duncan.[40]

Skirmishing broke out between the two lines on the 6th, the Confederate line stretching from Elk Ridge to the Potomac, as

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36 Barry, 149-51

37 Official Records, XXXVII, Part 1, 177.

38 Ibid., 178.

39 Early, 384-5.

40 Official Records, XXXVII, Part 1, 182.

Gordon pushed southward driving Union pickets back into their works, and destroying the canal locks and boats of the C & O.[41] While the skirmishing continued on the 7th, it was apparent to Union observers on Maryland Heights that it was only a demonstration as the Confederates could be seen withdrawing during the day , and that evening evacuating Harpers Ferry.[42]

On the next day Early continued his movement toward Washington, passing through the Crampton, Fox, and Boonsboro Gaps.[43] Commenting on his decision not to attack the Harpers Ferry garrison, Early noted that the strength of the Maryland Heights position, occupied by a heavy force of the enemy, would have conflicted on the attacking force a greater loss than the possession of the position would warrant.[44]

Early reported that his movements were made "in full view of the enemy on the heights."[45] This observation and signal tower on Maryland Heights was an invaluable aid to Union reconaissance during the entire period of the war. Its observation range very effectively covered the lower Shenandoah Valley, revealing

41 Ibid., 178; Early, 384-5.

42 Official Records, XXXVII, Part 1, 179, 186.

43 Early, 386.

44 Ibid., 254.

45 Ibid.

enemy movements between Charles Town, Shepherdstown, Martinsburg and down the Valley Pike toward Winchester, as well as northward to Sharpsburg.[46]

After the Confederate withdrawal from the Harpers Ferry region on the 7th, the Union troops moved into the town the next day. From July 8th until the end of the war the Union Army occupied Harpers Ferry without interruption.[47]

46 For an account of the Maryland Heights signal station activities during the Early raid see Ibid., 180-4.

47 A number of small (about three feet high) Washington monument-shaped markers have been erected in Jefferson County to mark skirmishes and engagements during the Civil War. On School House Hill near Halltown is #22, celebrating Stonewall Jackson's capture of Harpers Ferry. On Bolivar Heights along the Charles Town Turnpike is #24 opposite the field where the surrender of Harpers Ferry to Jackson was supposed to have taken place.

CHAPTER X

At the close of the Civil War Harpers Ferry looked just as one might expect a town to look after having been occupied and fought over for four years. Most of the buildings were in ruins.[1] Large portions of both Harpers Ferry and Bolivar had been burned by various detachments to prevent occupation by enemy troops. Schoolhouses and churches had been ruined by military use; the industry on the Island of Virginius had been completely destroyed. There was no longer the bustle and activity of an economically healthy town.[2]

The only work being done at the cbse of the war was the repair of broken guns in the ruin of the old Armory supervised by Daniel J. Young, an ordinance agent and ex-foreman of the rifle factory who had during the war been in charge of minor repairs to Union ordinance in the wrecked buildings of the Armory.

In addition to the material damage done by an endless procession of soldiers who filched and requisitioned everything a squad of men could dismember and carry, the town had suffered a greater loss--the majority of its people. During the war nearly all of the inhabitants had left Harpers Ferry for military service, to esca;e the military occupations, or to seek employment and subsistence after the destruction of the Armory and the mills. After the war

1 Bushong, 201.

2 Ibid., 201-02.

comparatively few of these people returned.[3] Quite a number of colored people who had drifted into the town with the troops to perform a variety of activities remained there, having no other place to go now that they were freedmen. And a number of Union soldiers married young ladies from the vicinity and remained after the war. But for the most part the town had only a fraction of its pre-war population.[4]

Harpers Ferry and Jefferson County had also undergone a major political change during the hostilities, both now within the bounds of the newly formed State of West Virginia. The origin of this war-time maneuvre was rooted in the grievances of the mountaineers of western Virginia who protested against what they felt was their position of an oppressed minority, forced on them by the planter aristocracy of the east.[5]

Western Virginia strongly opposed secession in 1861. At the Secession Convention the vote of the western delegates was thirty-two against secession, eleven for, four not voting; in the State referendum on May 23rd, northwest Virginia voted 44,000 to 4,000 against secession.[6]

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3 Barry, 5.

4 While the Census Report for 1870 lists no figures for Harpers Ferry, Bolivar had dropped from 1,130 in 1860 to 292 in 1870, most of the loss taking place during the Civil War.

5 Bushong, 190.

6 The following description of the establishment of West Virginia is found in Bushong, 191-3.

Angered by the action of Virginia in ignoring her stand, the western residents held a number of conventions at Wheeling at which time formation of a new state was planned. The Bill for admission passed Congress 11 December 1862 and by presidential proclamation West Virginia on June 20, 1863, became the thirty-fifth State.

The sentiment of Jefferson County during these arrangements could scarcely be described as sympathetic to the move which would sever the county from the Old Dominion. It was generally admitted that much of the welfare of the proposed State would depend upon the B & O railroad, and for this reason inclusion of the eastern "panhandle," containing Jefferson County, was decided upon by the separatists. Jefferson County did not vote on the proposed constitution for West Virginia either time it was submitted. On May 28, 1863, a referendum was held to decide upon the disposition of Jefferson County.

At the time of the voting Federal troops were in possession of the county and only two polling places were open in the entire county, one at Shepherdstown and the other at Harpers Ferry. Intent of course on fair play, the Union Army permitted only "loyal" persons to cast their ballots. Those unable to establish their loyalty to the Union by subscribing to the voters test oath were barred from the polls, a gesture which somewhat curtailed voting activity in the county. The recorded vote was 248 to 2 for the transferral of

Jefferson County to West Virginia. With pardonable pride the authorities announced the result to be a "full and free expression of the opinion of the people.[7]

By custon, tradition, and inclination, Jefferson County was more closely bound to Virginia than to the mountainous region to the west which had become West Virginia. Shortly after the close of the Civil War, a long and very severely waged legal battle began over the status of Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, with Virginia holding that their inclusion in the new State had been an illegal act.

Acting upon a plea from the Governor of Virginia, the radical Congress in 1866 voted to uphold the legality of West Virginia's war-time action. The case was carried to the United States Supreme Court, and in 1867 this tribunal failed to reach a decision, the vote being four and four.[8] Still determined to regain her two lost counties, Virginia continued the fight and the case was again brought to the Supreme Court in 1871. At this trial, by a vote of six to three, the allegation of fraud in the case of Berkeley and Jefferson Counties was not sustained and the counties were awarded to West Virginia.

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7 The number of voters in the 1860 election in Jefferson County was 1,857.

8 There was a vacancy on the bench, one of the members having died.

But resentment engendered during the controversy was long-lived. Reluctantly the county newspapers now began to insert "West" in front of "Virginia" on their sheets. And for a very long time many of the old residents refused to admit that they lived in "West Virginia."[9]

For more than a year after the close of the war a Union garrison was maintained at Harpers Ferry and soldiers continued to drill on the streets and fields of the town.[10] But with peace, Harpers Ferry was not immediately to know tranquility, as former residents, driven by the war to find temporary abodes beyond the area of hostilities, returned to their homes they found them occupied by squatters who asserted superior right as a result of their superior loyalty, or by others who had rented the vacant dwellings from the government as being in a state of semi-confiscation. The kind and humane policy of Gen. Egan, commandant in Harpers Ferry during the summer of 1865, restored the homes to their original owners and helped the return of the town towards "normalcy."[11]

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9 Bushlong, 198-200.

10 Barry, 162.

11 Ibid., 163.

The first important event in Harpers Ferry following the Civil War was the establishment of Storer College in 1867.[12] The Baptists, immediately after the war, began an education program for the Negroes in the Valley of Virginia, where they felt the former slaves to be perhaps more intelligent and enterprising than in many places in the South. From Harpers Ferry to Lexington day, night, and Sabbath Schools were founded, the whole under Rev. H. N. Brackett who had served in the Christian Commission in the Valley during the war. It was evident from the beginning to those interested in Negro education, that the establishment of Normal Schools was necessary so that Negroes might be trained as teachers and ministers to help the less fortunate of their race.

In February, 1867 Mr. John Storer of Sanford, Maine, offered $10,000 to any society which could match the amount--- the whole to be used to establish a school in the south for the benefit of the colored. President O. B. Cheney of Bates College, was interested in the idea as a Baptist project and immediately launched a campaign within the church to secure the money. It was Dr. Cheyney's hope that the institution would eventually become a college and be so chartered, and that it be open to both sexes without distinction of race or color.

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12 This account of the founding of Storer was taken from a paper presented by Miss K. J. Anthony at Ocean Park 15 August 1883 and printed in the Harpers Ferry Historical Booklet of the Jefferson County Sesqui-Centennial.

Dr. Cheyney went to Washington and laid his plans before Gen. O. O. Howard, Commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau, receiving a promise of $6,000 from that agency. A number of prominent men, including Secretary of War Stanton, Senator Fessenden, and General James A. Garfield were influenced by Dr. Cheyney to work for the project.

Harpers Ferry was chosen for the location of the new school and the farm of Mr. William Smallwood on Bolivar Heights was purchased for establishment of the school.[13] In June of 1867 at the annual meeting of the Home Mission Board of the Baptist Church in Northwood, N.H., "The Commission for the Promotion of Education in the South" was incorporated and it was this Commission which directed the college during its early years.

On October 2, 1867, Storer College began its career with Mr. Brackett as principal, assisted by another teacher Mrs. W. C. Smith of Maine, and an enrollment of nineteen pupils, all from the immediate vicinity. The first building occupied by the school was the government building on the crest of the hill overlooking the Harper Cemetery known as the "Lockwood House" and formerly the residence of John Hall. This building served as a dwelling, school, and church until, in 1868, through the efforts of Fessenden in the Senate and Garfield in the House the government

13 Barry, 173.

gave to Storer College four brick government buildings and seven acres on Camp Hill. These buildings were formerly residences of officers in the U.S. Armory and the largest one, the "Barbour House," on the crest of Camp Hill, is today, with an addition, the main administration building of Storer College.[14]

Acquisition of this land eliminated need for the farm near Bolivar, bought with the intention of establishing the school there, and the property, through cultivation and sale of lots, contributed to the financial support of the school during the early period.

The Freedmen's Bureau continued to support the school generously. Between 1867 and 1871 $18,000 was contributed toward operating expenses, renovation of the government buildings, and the erection of Lincoln Hall as a boarding hall for boys in 1868. Lacking the support from the Freedmen's Bureau, it is difficult to perceive how the school might have survived.

In view of the fact that education of the slaves had long been considered one of the prime evils and sources of trouble by many Southerners, it is not surprising that the idea of a Negro school was not graciously received in Harpers Ferry. It took all of Mr. Brackett's ability and firmness to overcome the prejudice of

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14 The Lockwood House, partitioned (?) as a dormitory, is not used by the College today. The other two buildings are residences of Mrs. Henry McDonald, wife of the former president, and Mr. Wolfe, the Librarian.

the town which continued for some time.[15]

Harpers Ferry suffered from a severe depression in the years immediately following the Civil War. Hope for its abatement was fostered in 1867 by the sale of Mr. A. H. Hear's interests on the Island of Virginius to the firm of Child and McCreight of Springfield, Ohio.[16] There had been no industrial activity on the island since the burning of Herr's flour mill by the Confederates early in the war.

The new firm immediately began fitting up the old cotton factory site for a flour mill. For over a year a large force of men were employed repairing the factory building and putting up machinery, and restoring the twenty-eight dwellings to usable condition. When put into operations the next year the new flour mill turned out 500 barrels of flour a day.[17]

Hope that the town might achieve its former prosperity was further stimulated in 1869 when the government decided to dispose of its holdings in Harpers Ferry.[18] This decision meant that the

15 Ibid., 173.

16 Ibid., 169.

17 Ibid., 170.

18 In addition to the arms plants the government owned a large part of the land and dwellings in the town.

valuable locations of Hall's works and the Armory along the Shenandoah and Potomac with their water power possibilities would be available to industries seeking factory sites. Attempts of local residents to have the rifle works re-established after the war had been unsuccessful.[19]

The public auction took place on the last day of November and first two days of December. The old Armory grounds and Hall's Rifle Works were sold to Captain F. C. Adams of Washington for $206,000. Adams, reputed to represent a group of Northern industrialists was given two years to make payment. Citizens purchased most of the homes and lots owned by the government throughout the town at high prices, indicating the optimism of the citizens for a renewal of the town's prosperity. Generous donations of lots for religious, charitable, and educational institutions were made. The aggregated value of the sale came to $294,444.50.[20]

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19 Bushong, 217. This was probably because the government was contracting rather than expanding its arms plants after the Civil War and because the constant threat of floods made a large investment a somewhat hazardous matter.

20 Bushong, 217; Barry, 169.

CHAPTER XI

With Captain Adams' purchase of the former government works, it was expected that the wealthy industrialists who were hinted to be his silent partners and who were to pay over $200,000 for the properties, would shortly erect a number of factories. Adams incorporated his group under the title of "The Harper's Ferry Manufacturing and Water Power Company," The town waited impatiently for the great things to come.[1]

Two rather spectacular events were to take place, but instead of bringing a "boom" to Harpers Ferry, they combined, along with the residual ravages of the war, to so batter the town and discourage the people that the eventual decline and decay of Harpers Ferry was assured.

Just when the acceleration of activity on Virginius and the enthusiasm generated from the sale seemed to indicate a comeback for Harpers Ferry, it was struck swiftly and savagely by the great flood of 1870, which not only halted recovery but left portions of the town in far worse shape than they had been as a result of the war.[2]

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1 Barry, 198.

2 A stirring account of this tragedy is recorded in Barry, 175-95.

While for several days previous to November 30th there had been heavy rains, no extraordinary rise of the rivers was expected because of the extended drought of the previous months. On that Friday morning a rapid rise of the Shenandoah began, continuing throughout the day. About 5:00 P.M. a telephonic report from up river indicated an even greater mass of water on the way and within a short time the level of the rushing water rose alarmingly.[3]

This unexpected rise quickly isolated Virginius from the mainland, sweeping away the bridges and marooning many who were unable to make a hasty exit. That night houses on Virginius were heard to collapse from the pounding of the water and in many cases screams from trapped inhabitants marked their fall. One person was able to hold onto a tree top on Virginius and was rescued next day; another was swept downstream and miraculously washed ashore at Berlin (now Brunswick), six miles below Harpers Ferry. Many lives on the island were lost.

Every house on Virginius and on the south side of Shenandoah Street to the Point was either entirely destroyed or badly injured except one.[4] About seventy buildings in the town were destroyed or

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3 Barry (177) suggests that the legend of the river rising six feet in four minutes at this time might be "exaggerated."

4 Ibid., 191.

rendered uninhabitable. Three families, totalling over twenty people, were swept to their death in the collapse of a building into which they had taken refuge. In all forty-two lives were lost.

The residue of filth and sediment had to be ploughed from the streets in some places, in others chasms several feet deep were cut by the waters. Trees two feet in diameter had battered the town buildings and were found wedged against the houses. The wood among the debris formed an important item of fuel during that winter for many of the residents.

Immediately after the flood a meeting of the citizens provided for supplying the victims with necessities and money, food, clothing, and fuel were contributed throughout the State. But the damage done by the flood was in many ways irreparable. More people were permanently driven from the town. The tremendous destructiveness of the waters no doubt became a definite and deciding factor for many individuals who might have planned to utilize the Virginius Island water power sites. Hope for recovery pretty much rested with Captain Adams and his "Harper's Ferry Manufacturing and Water Power Company."

The flood of 1870 was confined to the Shenandoah River, an unfortunate thing which was responsible for the large loss of life. Had both rivers flooded their juncture would have acted as a brake to slow the current of each. The area of inundation would have been greater but the velocity of the current which smashed

down buildings along the Shenandoah, would have been lessened.

One explanation of the more frequent and injurious floods at Harpers Ferry after the Civil War is that the great destruction of forests for military use during the Civil War and the increased commercial demand for timber after the war, with no regulation of cutting or replanting, resulted in rapid run-off of water during the season of heavy rains.[5]

In spite of the incorporation of the Harper's Ferry Water Power and Manufacturing Company, the expected boom failed to materialize. Following the great flood of 1870 the company was able to induce the government to extend time for payment, on grounds that flood damage had interfered with the company's development plans.[6]

Then came the stunning information that the company was engaged in a right-of-way legal controversy with the B & O railroad. The B & O had a long time before received the right-of-way permission from the government along the Armory yard, expecting no difficulty in operation of its tract. Now the Adams group brought suit of ejectment against the railroad and it was revealed that the company had bought the government property with no other purpose than the hope of winning a handsome settlement from the B & O railroad.[7]

5 Barry, 41.

6 Ibid., 199.

7 Ibid., Bushong, 217-18.

A long series of law suits followed involving the government, the B & O Railroad, and the Adams concern. Adams at first attempted to legally eject the B & O from the government property bordering the Rtomac River. Seeing that this would fail, and there was no longer a chance of realizing his original objective, Adams attempted to return the property to the government, claiming that the company had not received possession of all it bargained for. After much litigation the property finally reverted to the government, with the Adams group never paying for its purchase.

While this unfortunate action did not end all attempts to re-establish water powered industry at Harpers Ferry, it prevented such a development well into the years of industrial expansion following the Civil War, when water power was giving way to more modern methods of power.[8]

The government was not able to find a purchaser for its property until 1886 when Thomas H. Savoy and Company, of Wilmington, Delaware, bought the sites and the following spring began construction of a pulp mill along the Shenandoah and one along the Potomac.

Another episode in the history of bridges at Harpers Ferry occurred with the erection of a new bridge over the Shenandoah in 1882, the last until the modern bridge erected in 1949. The Harpers

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8 Barry (200) declares it was "absolutely certain" that if Adams had not bid the price of the land up, it would have been bought by the B & O Railroad for erection of a rolling mill.

Ferry Bridge Company, which had been operating a toll bridge across the Shenandoah at Bridge Street decided to erect a new bridge at the Point, striking the tip of Harpers Ferry near the Potomac bridge. This would enable one toll station and collector to handle fares on both bridges. Built of wooden timbers (replaced in 1910 by iron beams) this bridge stood until the great flood of 1936 washed it out. The piers however still stand.

Another of Harpers Ferry's great floods was experienced in the spring of 1889 when both rivers rose to "unprecedented heights";[9] however this time both rivers acted as mutual checks upon one another and there was little damage done of the type caused in 1870 by the swift current of the Shenandoah River. There was of course the damage resulting from inundation of buildings and the silt deposits left by the falling waters.

In 1892 alterations in the tract bed of the B & O and the removal of the engine house or "John Brown's Fort" from its location in the Armory yard constituted the greatest single physical change in the town's appearance since the dramatic events of 1859, 1861-65.[10]

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9 Barry, 198.

10 The engine house was one of the few buildings of the government works which had not been destroyed during the Civil War or in the fire preceding the war. Only the shells of the other buildings remained after the war and within a few years only the foundations of these buildings could be seen in the Armory yard.

The old bridge had become obsolete as well as dangerous. New and larger engines and rolling stock required a more modern, rugged structure.

In the summer of 1892 the B & O began work on a project which had been contemplated for some time. There were two extremely sharp turns in the track at Harpers Ferry, one as the railroad turned onto the bridge from the north shore of the Potomac, the other as it turned from the bridge onto the south shore of the Potomac. In each case the railroad negotiated an extreme change in direction in a comparatively short distance. Work was now begun to modify the acuteness of the curve.[11]

To eliminate the dangerous approach to the bridge on the north shore of the Potomac, a tunnel was cut more than 800 feet long through the spur of Maryland Heights which extended almost down to the water's edge. New piers were erected in the river and the new bridge struck the southern shore of the river about 200 feet west of the old structure. The old bridge was then used as a toll structure under arrangement with the public authorities. The new B & O bridge was opened for traffic April 12, 1894.

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11 The old curves of 16° and 18° were replaced with curves of 7° and 9° 30'.

These changes altered somewhat the face of Harpers Ferry, but it was the shift of the roadbed on the Harpers Ferry side of the river which completely destroyed the old location of the U.S. Armory. In order to eradicate the sharp turn from the bridge to the shore (the railroad had previously been situated on a wall and trestling on the edge of the river) the new road bed was moved about 100 feet south from the river. The new roadbed ran through the old Armory yard which was covered by a twenty-foot fill on which the track was laid.

In addition to eliminating the sharp turns, the new bed completed in 1893 eliminated the constant expense of keeping the old trestling along the river in repair and further protected the track from high water. Permission for the change was procured by the railroad from the town in return for the B & O's promise to build a new station at Harpers Ferry.[12]

The B & O alterations would have necessitated the removal of the engine house of the Armory--the only building which still remained in the Armory yard--but the famous old "Fort" was disposed of at the same time work was begun on the railroad. "The World's Columbian Exposition" was held in Chicago in 1893, and the

12 Book of the Royal Blue, January, 1901.

John Brown Fort was sought as an exhibit for the Fair. That Savoy & Co., owner of the fort, was composed of good, substantial businessmen "not bothered with sentiment" was shown by the prompt sale of the Fort by the concern, a "good sign of business qualifications."[13]

The Fort was dismantled in 1892-93 and shipped to Chicago and rebuilt where it shared billing with the Libbey Prison, a museum of war relics which had been removed from Richmond, Va., in a like manner. Although Civil War attractions were popular at that time, the venture was unsuccessful financially.

In danger of being torn down and destroyed after the Exposition closed, the plight of the old engine house became/concern of Miss Kate Field and a number of friends.[14] Through their efforts a fund was raised which permitted the fort to be again dismantled and shipped back to Harpers Ferry. Because of the track change of the B & O, its old location was no longer available; consequently it was rebuilt on the farm of Mr. Alexander Murphy along the Shenandoah River, about two miles from its original location in Harpers Ferry.[15]

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13 Barry, 201.

14 Miss Field, a woman of exceptional but eccentric talents, was a journalist, author, lecturer and actress; an apostle of reforms from her youth. The Dictionary of American Biography, VI, 368.

15 Barry, 67.

While the old Fort became a tourist attraction, its comparatively remote location prevented easy access at this, its third location. In 1909, the fiftieth anniversary of the Brown raid, through the efforts of Storer College, the much traveled Fort was again taken down and rebuilt, this time on the campus of Storer College on Camp Hill overlooking the Shenandoah River--about a half-mile from its original location.[16]

The Fort today has the same architectural appearance as it had in 1859. The outer courses of bricks were not carefully separated during the various rebuildings and the Fort now had a somewhat mottled appearance. Most, if not all of the woodwork is not original, nor are the interior furnishings.[17]

Harpers Ferry's history in the twentieth century has been a relatively eventless one, as the town slowly declined in population and importance.[18] Probably the only important changes were the new bridges built to replace those washed out in the 1936 flood.

In that flood both the highway toll bridges over the Potomac and Shenandoah were washed away by the high waters. By

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16 A small monument has been placed above the original location of the engine house.

17 The Fort is now operated as a museum by Storer College.

18 By 1930 Harpers Ferry had a population of only 705 (?), Bolivar 616, Census Report for 1930.

pushing freight cars loaded with coal onto the railroad bridge that structure was saved.

= Following the 1936 flood the planning of new bridges at Harpers Ferry was so involved with complications that eleven years were required before the Potomac was bridged. With Harpers Ferry situated at the juncture of Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland, the interests of three states had to be harmonized, especially in regards to location and division of the cost of construction.

A number of difficult questions had to be resolved co-operatively by the states. There was the problem of preserving historic Harpers Ferry and making the town easily accessible to the tourist. Involved was the location of U.S. Highway 340--the main route from Frederick, Md., to Winchester, Va., and thence to the Skyline Drive--which would cross the Potomac on the new bridge. If the bridge crossed at Harpers Ferry it would necessitate a widening operation around the base of Maryland Heights and would mean the congestion of heavy traffic through Harpers Ferry's narrow streets. In addition there would be the further defacement of the historic town by the construction of an approach to the bridge.

It was finally decided to build two bridges, one a mile below Harpers Ferry across the Potomac, one a mile above Harpers Ferry across the Shenandoah. Traffic on 340 would now bypass the town completely.

Construction of the new bridges required building along the south bank of the Potomac and Shenandoah a new highway to connect the bridges. This highway had to be blasted out of the bluffs of Loudoun Heights which fall almost vertically to the river. The new Potomac Bridge crossed at Sandy Hook and was completed in 1947; it is 2,179 feet in length, costing $1,136,000. The Shenandoah Bridge cost an estimated $600,000; the blasting and laying of route 340 between the two bridges bringing the total cost to nearly $2,000,000. The bridge was opened in 1949.

Today Harpers Ferry, especially the lower section, earns the title of "ghost town." The entire Island of Virginius is deserted, except for the line of the Winchester and Potomac Railroad. Except for the foundations of some of the old mills and the retaining walls of Hall's Rifle Works, there is no trace of its former activity. Even the channels which supplied water power to the various mills have been almost obliterated by the frequent floods which filled them with silt, and left the island a wasteland.

The Armory location disappeared with the B & O track change in 1893. Now a small monument marks the spot occupied by the engine house, and the outline of two of the Armory buildings has been marked by flat stones. The block occupied by the Arsenal, burned in 1861, now contains four buildings, the rest a vacant lot, the whole to be acquired by Harpers Ferry National Monument.

The block adjoining the former Arsenal yard, on the south side of Shenandoah Street, which contains the old Paymaster's House, will also be acquired by the Monument. The three houses west of the Paymaster's house, the one on the corner stretching back to the Winchester and Potomac tracks, are houses which were standing during the John Brown and Civil War period.

On the north side of Shenandoah Street, facing the above discussed block, are a number of buildings, long since deserted by human occupants, saved from total collapse only by the stoutness of the walls. With the exception of the large store in the middle of the black, most of these walls are extremely old, from the early nineteenth century. This block is also scheduled for acquisition.

The most historic structure, or group of structures, in Harpers Ferry today is "Harper House," looking down on the Potomac from above Hill Street. The easternmost building in this group of four was the original stone house begun by the founder of the town, Robert Harper, in the 1720's. These buildings, although occupied by a descendant of John Hall[19] are in a rather precarious condition, the center buildings being open to the sky. This group is to be included in the Monument.

Inundated too often by high water, the residents have moved more and more up to the high ground towards Camp Hill and into Bolivar; by 1940 the population had dropped to 665[20] and even the

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19 Mr. and Mrs. William Marmion.

20 Bushong, 225. Bolivar had 628.

position of policeman was abolished in 1950. There has been no bank since 1933.

One of the factors which has prevented partial restoration of the town's economy has been the intense rivalry with its sister town Bolivar. The combining of the two into one civic unit--they are really one town divided by an arbitrary boundary--would greatly increase the efficiency of operation and permit more fruitful (?) system of schools and public utilities and services. There seems, however, little likelihood of harmonious cooperation between Harpers Ferry and Bolivar.

But the charm of this venerable village and the attraction of the great moments of American History which it witnessed make Harpers Ferry potentially a worthy center for the visitor. Now the town, famous for its past, seems likely to translate that fame into a profitable industry which will be untouched by the raging waters of the Shenandoah and Potomac or the threat of civil strife.

CHAPTER XII

Because history has more closely identified Harpers Ferry with John Brown than with any other person, event, or activity, and because the majority of visitors to Harpers Ferry will no doubt be primarily interested in the exploits of "Old Osawatomie," a full account of his raid will be essayed.

John Brown was born at Torrington, Conn., in 1800, his ancestry of middle class New England stock dating back to 1632.[1] Enjoying but scanty schooling, he early acquired a liking for life in the open. Plying various trades--tanner, shepherd, surveyor, partner in wool-grower's brokerage--he was uniformly unsuccessful. A lifelong abolitionist, friend, and protector of the Negroes, his desire to be an instrument in the eradication of slavery was crystallized by an appeal in 1855 for help from his sons who had emigrated to Kansas.

Of Brown's career in the Kansas bloodletting, highlighted by his leadership of the band of free-soilers who hacked five men to death with broadswords along the Potawatomie Creek in May, 1856, in retaliation for the sack of Lawrence and other activities by

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1 Villard, Oswald Garrison, John Brown, 10.

the pro-slavery forces, this study cannot deal. By the time of Brown's return from his first trip to Kansas in the fall of 1856, he had become dedicated to the overthrow of slavery, and his Kansas experience had trained and accustomed him to the use of force.

Brown's attack upon Harpers Ferry was the culmination of a plan which he had evolved many years before, even previous to his first trip to Kansas. He had come to believe that a location within the slave states should be selected where raids on slave plantations could be easily carried out and the freed slaves sent to safety in the North. As a result of his study of European fortifications and military operations,[2] Brown had decided that somewhere along the Allegheny Mountain Chain a small force of men could achieve those objectives.[3]

By the early 1850's, the outline of the plan was taking shape in Brown's mind.[4] Convinced that mountains throughout history had enabled the few to defend themselves against the many, he believed that even against regular troops a small force could defend itself and that a mountain stronghold would provide sanctuary

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2 In addition to reading on the subject Brown visited France and Germany during his trip to England in 1849 on business for his wool firm.

3 Stutler, 18.

4 Villard, 48-50.

for the freed bondsmen, where they could be supplied with arms to fight for their liberty.

One of the most interesting of the many speculations concerning Brown's intentions at Harpers Ferry is that of his real purpose. It is generally accepted, and Brown himself declared, that his intention was to free and arm slaves in the vicinity of Harpers Ferry and assist them to reach safety in the North or in Canada. But, as a third party candidate in a political campaign often runs with the intent of influencing policy rather than achieving position, so Brown might well have expected his raid to fail but his objectives to be achieved.

Even had his raid or raids been successful few of the slave population could be reached.[5] And even a man of Brown's single-minded purpose might have expected stern opposition from state and Federal troops. But it seems that through the evolution of the plan in Brown's mind, the scope widened. At first a raid or series of raids was planned, whose impetus might inspire similar actions throughout the South, terrorize the slaveholders and render slavery less profitable.[6] Eventually Brown hoped that his action might force a settlement of the slavery question by setting the South afire. Then by Southern secession, which was already threatened, and resulting Civil War, the South would be defeated and forced to

5 Estimated slave population in 1861--3,954,000. Coulter, E. Merton, The Confederate States of America 1861-1865, 440.

6 Villard, 56.

accept Union without slavery, and the fire bell in the night would be stilled forever. John Brown's son heard his father discuss this plan "by the hour" and insisted that "the Harpers Ferry raid had that idea behind it far more than any other."[7]

During Brown's second visit to Kansas[8] he began recruiting his force for the projected raid. Told only that he was organizing a company to resist pro-slavery aggressions, John E. Cook, Aaron D. Stevens, and John H. Kagi, all of whom were to play outstanding roles in the drama at Harpers Ferry joined him at that time.[9] Beside a campfire, on the prairie northwest of Topeka, the recruits learned that they were to leave Kansas and attend a military school during the winter.[10] On arriving at Tabor, Iowa, the group was augmented by seven more volunteers, including three who later participated in the Harpers Ferry raid.[11] Here they learned that Captain Brown's "ultimate destination was the State of Virginia."[12] His whole soul was now wrapped up in his Harper's Ferry plan; Kansas was thenceforth forgotten."[13]

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7 Ibid.

8 Brown made three trips to Kansas, October, 1855 to October, 1856; November, 1857; June, 1858 to February, 1859.

9 Ibid., 308.

10 Confessions of John E. Cook, printed in The Life Trial and Execution of Captain John Brown

11 C. P. Tidd, Wm. H. Leeman, and Owen Brown.

12 Cook Confessions

13 Villard, 309.

Shortly afterwards his men learned that Harpers Ferry was the possible point of attack.[14] Kagi, who had taught school near Harpers Ferry and knew the area, gave Brown valuable information about the town. It fitted Brown's requirements perfectly. It lay near the mountains which Brown counted upon to supply a hiding place, it was on the border of Virginia and within forty miles of the Pennsylvania border. Nearby was a large slave population and in the town was the United States Armory and Arsenal where arms were known to be stored. The idea of striking Harpers Ferry had apparently been discussed by Brown with his followers as far back as August, 1857.[15]

After a tour of the East raising funds, Brown and nine of his followers reached Chatham, Canada on April 29, 1858, where the remarkable "Chatham Convention" was held which Brown envisaged would provide legal sanction for his forthcoming attack on slavery.[16]

In addition to Brown's party of twelve (of which eight took part in the Harpers Ferry raid) thirty-four colored men attended, only one of the latter group reaching Harpers Ferry. In his address to the convention, Brown outlined his plan, which one of the members related to the Mason Committee.[17]

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14 Villard, 313.

15 Hugh Forbes to Dr. Howe, 27 October 1859, Ibid.

16 Villard, 328.

17 Mason Report, 96-7.

> ...Upon the first intimation of a plan formed for the liberation of the slaves, they would immediately rise all over the Southern States. He (Brown) supposed that they would come into the mountains to join him, where he purposed to work, and that by flocking to his standard they would enable him (by making the line of mountains which cuts diagonally through Maryland and Virginia down through the Southern States into Tennessee and Alabama, the base of his operations) to act upon the plantations on the plains lying on each side of that range of mountains, and that we should be able to establish ourselves in the fastnesses, and if any hostile action (as would be) were taken against us, either by the militia of the separate states, or by the armies of the United States, we purposed to defeat first the militia, and next, if it were possible, the troops of the United States, and then organize the freed blacks under this provisional constitution, which would carve out for the locality of its jurisdiction all that mountainous region in which the blacks were to be established, and in which they were to be taught the useful and mechanical arts, and to be instructed in all the business of life. Schools were also to be established.

If Brown's ideas were faithfully restated in this testimony, the claim of insanity which the South uniformly and passionately made against Brown can be viewed with understanding. The intended establishment of a separate state within the boundaries of slavery capable of fighting off the militia of the states as well as the United States Army--all with an army which at the time numbered twelve men, indicated at the very least that Brown had restricted comprehension of the events which would most surely follow his planned action.

Nor was Brown's logic completely understood in the light of the below noted article of the Constitution adopted by the convention, providing for the establishment of a provisional government with Executive, Congress, and Supreme Court and the election of officers to fill the posts of Commander-in-Chief, Secretary of War, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, and two members of Congress. Article XLVI of the Constitution declared that it "shall not be construed so as in any way to encourage the overthrow of any State Government or of the General Government of the United States."

This Constitution for Brown's provisional government "is still a chief indictment of Brown's saneness of judgment and his reasoning powers."[18] Even his admirers doubt Brown's sanity in drawing up such a document.[19] The London Times, the essence of sanity and understatement concluded from studying it that "It would seem that Mr. Brown and his friends had no conception of any manner of carrying on public business."[20]

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18 Villard, 335.

19 Von Holst, Hermann, John Brown.

20 4 November 1859, quoted in Villard, I 628.

With the adjournment of the Convention, Brown, again out of funds, left for the East to gather supplies and money for the attack which he hoped would take place that year (1858). His men scattered, seeking employment to maintain themselves. However the activities of one of his lieutenants was to delay for another year the assault in Virginia.

But before going into the defection of Hugh Forbes, whom Brown had engaged to train his company in military tactics, it is necessary to look into the New England group which provided money, arms, and encouragement to Brown in his fight against slavery in Kansas and elsewhere.

To equip, maintain, and transport these men Brown required a considerable amount of money and weapons. He had neither. His business career as a wool merchant had ended in 1854 with a series of disastrous lawsuits. For a while, he lived upon the products of his farming. Soon he was able to enlist the support of Northern backers of his fight against slavery and "From August, 1856, when he first returned from Kansas, until October, 1859, he was thus maintained, without a regular business or regular labor of any kind."[21]

Chiefly responsible for sustaining Brown and his men was a group of prominent New England abolitionists, members of the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee which was engaged in helping the free-soil cause in Kansas. Brown met Frank Sanborn in 1856

21 Ibid., 66.

shortly after returning from his first trip to Kansas and made an instant impression on this militant young abolitionist, only a year and a half out of Harvard. Eventually five men grouped themselves as an informal or "Secret Committee" to aid Brown in his attacks on slavery.[22]

They constituted an impressive group. In addition to Sanborn it included Theodore Parker, the outstanding Unitarian clergyman in Boston, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, educator, minister, and reformer, and George L. Stearns, a successful merchant. Through them Brown received most of the money and weapons which enabled him to launch his attack.

In January, 1857, this Committee had given Brown custody of 200 Sharpe's rifles, then stored in Tabor, Iowa.[23] These rifles had originally been purchased by the National Kansas Committee in the fall of 1856 and remained under Brown's direction until he had them shipped to Harpers Ferry in the summer of 1859.[24]

Brown, in May, 1858, came East to raise funds and prepare for the raid which he planned for that year. There he was confronted with the reaction of his backers to the intrigues of Hugh Forbes.

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22 Sanborn, Frank, "John Brown and His Friends," Atlantic Monthly July, 1872.

23 Villard, 274.

24 Sanborn, Frank, "John Brown in Massachusetts, " Atlantic Monthly April, 1872.

Forbes, an adventurer who had fought with Garibaldi, had been engaged to drill Brown's men and recruit army officers.[25] His primary purpose, it seemed, was to line his own pocket and he extracted from Brown and Brown's friends as much money as possible. Now he wanted more money and threatened to reveal the plan if money were not forthcoming.[26] Receiving no satisfaction, Forbes carried his threat to the floor of the United States Senate making varied and often fantastic claims of the intentions of Brown and his backers.[27]

On May 9th, 1858, Senator Wilson wrote to Dr. Howe in somewhat of a panic over the commotion being stirred up by Forbes, warning that Brown intended to use the arms supplied him for purposes other than the defense of Kansas and that the arms should be taken from him.[28] Stearns, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Massachusetts State Committee, informed Brown promptly that the arms were to be used for the defense of Kansas and for no other purpose,[29] The result was the temporary postponement of the Virginia plan.

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25 Foner (?), Philip S., Life and Writings of Frederick Douglas

26 Sanborn, "John Brown and His Friends," loc cit.

27 Forbes talked with Senators Henry Wilson and William H. Seward

28 Villard, 339. Villard incorrectly gives the reference letter as Mason Report, 177 (?).

29 Mason Report, 177.

While outwardly disavowing any support to Brown's scheme, the action of the secret committee served to protect itself in case its sponsorship of an attack such as Brown planned became public knowledge. Higginson, one of the secret committee met Brown and learned of the decision of the remaining members of the committee. "It was to postpone till next winter or spring when they wd. raise $2000 or $3000; he (Brown) meantime to blind F. (Forbes) by going to K (Kansas) and to transfer the property (arms owned by the committee) so as to relieve them of the responsibility.---and they in future not to know his plans."[30]

Brown was greatly discouraged by the action, feeling the delay would discourage the thirteen men he was training for the raid in Ohio. While he admitted that warning of the action given by Forbes might be "injurious", he preferred not to lose a day.[31]

To permit Brown future freedom of action, the committee, in the person of Stearns, adopted a procedure which was to bring upon them the opprobrium of those who denounced Brown's assault at Harpers Ferry.

Stearns had at various times advanced rather large sums to the Massachusetts Kansas Committee, asking only the arms as security

30 Villard, 340.

31 Ibid.

for his loan. Now he merely foreclosed, accepted the arms in lieu of his loan, and presented them and $500 to Brown.[32] Brown was to proceed immediately to Kansas to throw Forbes off the trail and to ease the position of the committee; afterwards he might act as he saw fit. In the future the secret committee was to know nothing of his plans.[33]

In evaluating the committee's action, Brown's biographer notes:

> ...the decision of the little Boston group, after giving Brown the five hundred dollars and the arms, in 1858, to know no more of his plans, is the first sign of the effort to evade responsibility which became so apparent after the raid. They had encouraged him to attack slavery in the mountains of the south, giving him money and arms to do it with, and sanctioned his going ahead,--only they said: "Do not tell us the details of it".[34]

Before leaving for his final visit to Kansas in June 1858, Brown set in motion his Harpers Ferry plan. Calling his followers together and notifying them of the decision of the Boston backers of their plan, he divided the money he had among them and bid them to be true to the cause.[35] Then he sent John E. Cook to

32 Ibid., 341.

33 Sanborn, Frank, "John Brown and His Friends," Atlantic Monthly, July, 1872.

34 Villard, 342. Of ~~all~~ the $4,000 which passed through the hands of the secret committee to finance Brown's preparations, "at least $3800 were given with a clear knowledge of the use to which it would be put." Sanborn, 523.

35 Villard, 343.

Harpers Ferry where he was to live and secure information to aid the main body when it arrived.[36]

Brown then left for Kansas, on this last trip contributing to the legend already surrounding his name by liberating eleven slaves, killing one of their masters, and escorting them safely to Canada on a 1100 mile trek. For this deed President Buchanan offered a reward of $250 and the Governor of Missouri $3,000 for the capture of Brown.[37]

A rather startling fact was evidenced during Brown's public campaign for funds after his return from Kansas in the spring of 1859. Despite the extensive publicity given to Brown's deeds in Kansas, so widespread that he was familiarly known as "Old Osawatomie" to the reading public throughout the country, attendance at meetings where Brown was advertised as lecturer was small. In Cleveland where the event was publicized, only fifty people paid a quarter each to hear the Kansas veteran speak.[38]

At this last public appearance in May 1859, at the Tremont Temple in Boston, Brown made an appearance at the Church Anti-Slavery Society meeting. Called on to address the body just before the main

36 Ibid., 344.

37 The raid took place in Missouri, just across the Kansas border.

38 Ibid., 393. While showing no consuming passion to see Brown, the people of Cleveland made no effort to collect the reward offered for Brown in posters throughout the town, one displayed within two blocks of Brown's hotel. Ibid., 393-4.

speaker, Brown uttered only a sentence or two before there were calls for the principal orator of the evening and Brown sat down "rather abruptly" saying he was "more accustomed to action than to speaking."[39]

Brown was now just fifty-nine years old. The rigors of frontier life had left their imprint on him and he walked more than ever "like an old man."[40] "Artemus Ward" described Brown's appearance in Cleveland in March, 1859.[41]

> He is a medium-sized, compactly-built and wiry man, and as quick as a cat in his movements. His hair is of a salt and pepper hue and as stiff as bristles, he has a long, waving, milk-white goatee, which gives him a somewhat patriarchal appearance, his eyes are gray and sharp.

Brown had permitted his beard to grow previous to his last visit to Kansas. An excellent disguise--covering his square chin and straight, firm mouth--it "changes his appearance entirely."[42]

Brown was now almost ready to leave for Harpers Ferry and begin collecting his scattered forces and building up supplies for the raid. Before accompanying him to Virginia another astonishing facet of the raid deserves examination--the number of people who were conversant with Brown's plans.

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39 Mason Report, Testimony of Henry Wilson.

40 Villard, 310.

41 Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer, 22 March 1859, quoted in Villard, 391-2.

42 Lawrence, William, Life of A. A. Lawrence, 130.

In his attempts to recruit men in his attacking force and enlist the financial aid of wealthy and influential men, Brown disclosed his plan directly to a great number of people, and the secondary communication of this "secret" must have been extremely large. At his base in Ohio Brown apparently discussed openly his projected attack in Virginia, although in general terms.[43] Francis J. Merriam, an earnest young New England abolitionist, had written Brown in December 1858, that he had heard of Brown's "general purpose" and wished to join him.[44] Forbes of course had hinted if not revealed to many Brown's objective at Harpers Ferry.[45] With at least eighty persons in on the secret, it is rather strange that word did not reach the authorities in a more direct fashion than the letter received by the Secretary of War.[46]

Taking leave of his friends in Boston, Brown received from them in June 1859, $2,000, about half of which was given by Stearns.[47] In Chambersburg, Pa., on June 30th, Brown wrote to Kagi, who was to establish a headquarters in Chambersburg from where supplies would be forwarded to Brown in Harpers Ferry.[48]

Villard, 43 402.

44 Francis J. Merriam to John Brown, 23 December 1858, Dreer Collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

45 Villard, 410.

46 For a discussion of the warning to Floyd, see chapter on Kennedy Farm.

47 Sanborn, Frank, "John Brown and His Friends, "loc cit.

48 I. Smith to John Henrie, 30 June 1859, Dreer Collection. "I.Smith" and "John Henrie" were the aliases adopted by Brown and Kagi.

> We leave here today for Harpers Ferry; (via) Hagerstown. When you get there you had best look on the Hotel register for I. Smith and sons without making much enquiry. We shall be looking for cheap land near the Railroad in all probability. You can write I. Smith and Sons at Harpers Ferry should you <u>need</u> to do so.

The day before Brown's wife had written him in care of Kagi "I do hope that you will be blessed with health and success in the good and great cause your (sic) are engaged in."[49]

49 Mary D. Smith to John Brown in case of John Henry 29 June, 1859, Dreer Collection.

CHAPTER XIII - KENNEDY FARM

On the evening of July 3rd, 1859, John Brown arrived by train in Harpers Ferry.[1] With him were two of his sons, Owen and Oliver, and Jeremiah Anderson, who had accompanied Brown on the Missouri raid.[2] Learning that they could get board "the cheapest" at Sandy Hook, a small village down the Potomac on the Maryland shore about a mile from Harpers Ferry, Brown and his comrades proceeded there that evening, staying at the home of Mr. Ormand Butler.[3] The courteous elderly gentleman gave his name as Isaac Smith and introduced his three young companions as his sons.[4]

The town of Harpers Ferry as it was first seen by Brown is described by one of his biographers.[5] Originally it was built on two streets, stretching along a narrow shelf between the base of the bluffs and the rivers, which met at a right angle at the Point. To accommodate the growing population the town straggled up the slopes of the bluffs. Along the Potomac the street was occupied by the workshops and offices of the Armory. At the Point, across from

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1 Mason Report, Testimony of John C. Unseld, 5.

2 Villard, 402.

3 Mason Report, 5, Barry, 54.

4 Anderson, 26, had done considerable fighting in Kansas. Oliver Brown, 20, was introspective, constantly reading. Owen Brown, 34, a man of great courage and physical strength, was John Brown's trustworthy lieutenant at Harpers Ferry and in Kansas. Villard, 681, 683, 686.

5 Redpath, James, Captain John Brown, 245-6

the Armory entrance stood the old Arsenal buildings where the completed arms were stored. Dwellings extended a half mile up the Shenandoah to Hall's Rifle Works.

Brown was up early on July 4th and began exploring the land on the Maryland side of the Potomac.[6] On the edge of Maryland Heights he met Mr. John C. Unseld, who resided nearby, and who evidently had the rustic's inherent curiosity. To Unseld's inquiries,[7] Brown replied that he wished to buy some cheap land. Prodded further Brown revealed that he had come from northern New York where long, severe winters had made farming unprofitable, and that he now planned to try further south.

Returning from his trip to Harpers Ferry later in the day Unseld again descended upon the Brown party. This time Brown declared that the countryside seemed attractive to a prospective farmer and might there be a farm for sale nearby?[8] Unseld told him of the farm owned by the heirs of Dr. R. F. Kennedy about four miles north of Harpers Ferry. Noting that he preferred to rent, if possible, Brown walked up to look the place over that evening.[9]

During his stay of about a week at Sandy Hook, Brown's conduct was unexceptional and caused no particular comment. He paid in gold for what he purchased, was courteous to all and was well received.[10]

6 Mason Report, Testimony of John C. Unseld, 1.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. 2.

9 Ibid.,

10 Barry, 55.

The location of the Kennedy Farm was particularly acceptable to Brown. It was admirably situated for concealment, being somewhat remote from other settlements and some distance back from the public road. Surrounded by woods and hidden by undergrowth, it offered an ideal location for the accumulation of Brown's men and supplies without observation by his neighbors.[11]

Judge Jacob Fiery, administrator of Dr. Kennedy's estate, while working on his farm near Hagerstown, was approached by an elderly man with a "grizzled beard" who introduced himself as "I. Smith."[12] Fiery agreed to rent the farm, accepting the first quarter's rent in gold for the two houses, pasture for a cow and horse and firewood, paying until March, 1860.[13]

Kennedy Farm consisted of two log structures and some outbuildings. The main building, which is generally known as "Kennedy Farm", was a plain log house with a high basement. The main floor contained a living room and sleeping space and an attic. (?) Beneath the house a half basement used as kitchen and storeroom was partially underground. According to one of the raiders, the downstairs was

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11 Boteler, Alexander, "John Brown Raid," Century, July, 1883. Kennedy Farm lies about 4½ miles north of Harpers Ferry on the western side of the Elk Ridge. A quarter of a mile south of Kennedy Farm a road branches off the main Sharpsburg highway, passing through Solomon's Gap to Rohrersville in Pleasant Valley. This junction is known as "Sample's Manor" and the Kennedy Farm is about 300 feet west of the branch road.

12 Williams, Thomas J.C., A History of Washington County, Maryland, I,287.

13 Mason Report, Testimony of John C. Unseld, 3.

was used as kitchen, parlor, and dining room, the upstairs for store-room, drilling room and "prison", to keep men out of sight. Across the Rohrersville road from Kennedy Farm stood the small cabin which Brown later used as a storage place for weapons and sleeping quarters for some of his men.[14]

Brown had decided that to maintain the secrecy of his plan it would be necessary to have women with the group, which would help give the appearance of home life to the camp. He had written to his wife before moving with his men from Sandy Hook to Kennedy Farm suggesting that she and his daughter Annie come to live with the band, advising that "It will be likely to prove the most valuable service you can ever render to the world."[15]

While Brown's wife was unable to come, their daughter Annie, and Martha Brown, wife of Brown's son Watson arrived from North Elba, New York[16] on the 16th of July, moving into Kennedy Farm on the 19th after boarding several days with a Mr. Nicholls.[17] Their presence was to prove of inestimable value not only in preventing suspicion but in contributing to the morale of Brown's followers during the long vigil.

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14 Anderson, 11; Featherstonhaugh, Thomas, John Brown's Men, 4; Boteler, Alexander, "John Brown Raid", Century, July, 1883; Villard, 404.

15 Ibid., 405

16 North Elba was Brown's home in his later life and he was buried there after his execution.

17 Mason Report, Testimony of John Unseld, 4; Villard, 405.

Established at his base, Brown now laid plans for the concentration of his followers. However, feeding a large group of men would quickly exhaust his finances. He therefore determined to first assemble his arms and supplies before sending for his scattered followers to join him at Harpers Ferry. On July 10th he wrote to the faithful Kagi at Chambersburg giving directions for the forwarding of his "freight" and his waiting men.

> I wish you to give such explanations to our friends as to our situation here; as after advising with Owen you will be enabled to do. We can of course do nothing of purpose till our freight is mostly received.... It will be distressing in many ways to have a lot of hands for many days out of employ. We must have time to get on our freight; and also to get on some who are at a distance; before calling on those who are ready and waiting. We must make up our lot of hands as nearly at one and the same time; as possible...."[18]

Forwarding of the arms from Ohio was entrusted to John Brown, Jr.[19] On the 18th of July he wrote his father that he could "devote all my time for the present entirely to any business you may see fit to entrust me. Shall immediately ship your freight as you directed...."[20] By the 27th he was able to report to Kagi that all the "Hardware and Castings", fifteen boxes in all had been shipped and that the "household stuff" would be sent shortly.[21]

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18 I.Smith to John Henrie, 10 July 1859, Dreer Collection.

19 Captured and subjected to extreme cruelty by border Ruffians in Kansas, John had temporarily lost his sanity and could not be relied upon for the arduous task at Harpers Ferry.

20 John Smith to "Dear Father", forwarded by Kagi at Chambersburg, 18 July 1859, Dreer Collection.

21 John Smith to J. Henrie, 27 July 1859, Dreer Collection

The fifteen boxes of arms arrived in Chambersburg on August 11th and from there were transported to Kennedy Farm by freight wagon. For other supplies and for the household goods the small covered wagon which Brown had purchased for the purpose was used.[22] Generally two men accompanied these trips, one to drive the wagon and one on horseback to watch for danger.[23]

Kyd Douglas relates in his war-time reminiscences of meeting Brown and the wagon one day bogged down from the heavy load of "miner's tools." Helping to pull the wagon free, Douglas was much impressed with Brown's dignity and simplicity.[24]

Not yet having received the arms or household goods by early August, Brown wrote Kagi to hold up the men if possible until the boarding house at Kennedy Farm was ready to receive them for at the farm they would be idle and in danger of being seen. "Everything is exactly right: if we can only avoid suspicion: but we shall be obliged to conceal any increase of numbers; as we cannot find a good excuse for having a larger company. People are very curious about our business."[25]

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22 Villard, 407.

23 Ibid.

24 Douglas, Henry Kyd, I Rode With Stonewall, 2, although the description of the incident doesn't quite jobe with the known facts of Brown's trips to transport the arms, the event taking Place somewhat off Brown's regular route.

25 I. Smith to John Henrie, 2 August 1859, Dreer Collection.

On the 6th of August Watson Brown[26] and William and Dauphin Thompson[27] arrived at Kennedy Farm. Eight more arrived before the end of August.[28] Even so, constant and inquisitive a visitor as Unseld noticed no increase in the number of persons at Kennedy Farm during this time.[29]

Especially difficult was the bringing of the negro members of Brown's little army to Kennedy Farm and secreting them there.[30] Had colored men been sighted at Kennedy Farm by curious neighbors, an investigation could have been expected and the secret revealed. All of the colored men were brought in during the night, Brown generally escorting them from Chambersburg in his covered wagon.[31]

Brown had hoped to enlist Frederick Douglass, the famed abolitionist, orator, and journalist, because of Douglass' position as leader of his race in its struggle for freedom from slavery.

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26 Three of Brown's sons took part in the raid, Oliver, Owen, and Watson.

27 Villard, 414.

28 C.P.Todd, Aaron Stevens, Albert Hazlett, Stewart Taylor, Barclay and Edwin Coppoc, Shields Green (colored), William Leeman. Ibid.

29 Mason Report, testimony of John C. Unseld, 4.

30 There were five--Shields Green, Lewis Leary, John Copeland, Osborn Anderson, and Dangerfield Newby.

31 Anderson, 23.

According to Douglass[32] he met Brown for the first time in 1847 or 1848 at which time Brown revealed his plan to conduct a campaign for the emancipation of slaves from a stronghold in the mountains. The two men discussed the plan many times during succeeding years as it took form in Brown's mind.[33]

Now, at Brown's request, Douglass met Brown at a rendezvous near Chambersburg, from August 19th to 21st. With the noted negro leader came Shields Green, an escaped slave.[34] When the details of the planned assault on Harpers Ferry were revealed to Douglass he declined to participate, holding that an attack against the government would antagonize the people to whom the abolitionists looked for support, and that the plan had no chance of succeeding. Douglass asked Shields Green what he wished to do. "I b'lieve I'll go wid de ole man", Green replied.

Nor was Douglass Brown's only disappointment. Men he had counted upon to join him now for various reasons reported themselves unable to do so. Even two of his sons, Jason and Salmon (?), declined to join the Kansas veteran.[35]

Meanwhile Brown had a number of his friends and supporters in the North recruiting men for service at Harpers Ferry.[36] His son

33 Foner, Philip S., Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, I, 87-9

34 For details of this meeting see Douglass, 354-8.

35 Jason had experienced the same treatment at the hands of his captors in Kansas as had his brother John, Salmon, who had been one of the party which committed the Potawatomie Creek murders, later (1908) declared that he refused to join because he feared his father would hesitate and delay until he was trapped. Villard, 424.

36 Sanborn, Frank "The Virginia Campaign of John Brown "Atlantic Monthly December, 1875.

32 Douglas, Frederick, Life and Times of Frederick Douglas, 338 FF

John seeking volunteers for the venture travelled to Boston and sought help from Brown's Boston friends.[37] Sanborn felt that had the raid been postponed until the Spring of 1860 perhaps fifty men might have been assembled, but the risk involved and the constant chance of the secret being discovered would hardly have warranted waiting to increase the size of the striking force.[38]

At Harpers Ferry, John Brown's most trying task was to keep his slowly increasing force occupied and out of sight of inquisitive visitors. Forced to remain in the two small houses during the day, the men had little choice but to talk or read.[39] Meals were served downstairs to the men, the women keeping guard during the meal and eating afterwards. After breakfast in the morning John Brown would read from the Bible and utter a short prayer.

Then the men would retire to the loft where they would study the military manual prepared for them by Forbes or be drilled by Stevens.[40] To pass away the long summer days the men would read magazines, sing, tell stories, argue politics, play cards or checkers. Because of the amounts required, most of the food supply was purchased at the towns along the road to Chambersburg, Brown occasionally going

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37 John Smith to J. Henrie, 2 September 1859, Dreer Collection; Frank Sanborn to "Dear Friend", 27 August 1859, Dreer Collection.

38 Sanborn, "The Virginia Campaign of John Brown," loc cit.

39 For an excellent account of the daily routine at Kennedy Farm see Villard, 416-20, by Brown's daughter Annie. The following except for other citations noted, is from that account.

40 Anderson, 11. Anderson also gives an informative narrative of life at the Kennedy Farm.

into Harpers Ferry to pick up his copy of the Baltimore Sun at the post office or to purchase flour at the mill on Virginius.[41] If a neighbor would arrive unexpectedly during mealtime the men would gather up the food, disher, and table cloth and carry it to the loft to finish. Like all men members of the band would wander into the kitchen to visit with the cooks, Annie and Martha. The colored men were not permitted to go beyond the limits of the dining room.

Annie was designated by her father as sentinel, reading, sewing, or appearing occupied near the door or on the porch where she could instantly warn of the approach of strangers. "Father would often tell me that I must not let any work interfere with my constant watchfulness. That others could help do the housework, but he depended on me to watch."[42]

At night the men were able to go outdoors for fresh air and exercise.[43] When there were thunderstorms the men would jump and play, making as much noise as possible as they enjoyed the release from quietness and inactivity. As the main building became more crowded with the increase in personnel later in the summer, Owen, Watson, the two Thompsons and Jeremiah Anderson moved across the road to the other building.[44]

41 New York Herald, 1 November 1859.

42 Villard, 418.

43 Anderson, 11.

44 Featherstonehaugh, 7.

The most exasperating of the country folk who came to "visit" with the "new folks" and to keep general track of their activities was Mrs. Huffmeister, the neighbor nearest to Kennedy Farm, who supplies the only touch of humor to the grim preparations moving forward under the stern eye of John Brown. "No one can ever imagine the pestering torment that little barefooted woman and her four little children were to us. Martha called them the little hen and chickens."[45] After the men would do the washing Martha and Annie would spread the clothes to dry on the fence and along the grass. While the clothes were brought into the house as quickly as they dried, the hasty scramble seldom escaped the scrutiny of Mrs. Huffmeister or her piquant observations, as on one occasion, "Your men folks has a right smart lot of shirts."[46]

It was not only the residents of the vicinity whom John Brown feared might learn the secret of Kennedy Farm; there was the problem of preventing information concerning the raid from being disclosed by members of the company. It was natural for them to wish to hint to those loved ones with whom they corresponded of the great adventure which they faced. Disgusted with this carelessness, Brown shared his worry with Kagi.

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45 Annie Brown's tale in Villard, 419.

46 Ibid., 418.

> I do hope all corresponding except on business of the Co: will be droped[47] for the present. If everyone must write some girl; or some other extra friend telling, or shoing[48] our location; and telling as some have done all about our matters; we might as well get the whole published at once, in the New York Herald. Any person is a stupid fool who expects his friends to keep for him; that which he cannot keep himself.[49]

John E. Cook was the person Brown most dreaded would thoughtlessly expose the plan, being in "constant fear" of this possibility.[50] Cook had been at Harpers Ferry for over a year, arriving on June 5th, 1858, with orders to secure information for the convenience of Brown's expedition when it arrived at the Ferry, and to pose as a member of the community. Of pleasing appearance and personality, Cook had indeed become a member of the community, as book agent, prospector, lock-tender on the C & O Canal,[51] and in April, 1859, marrying the attractive daughter of his landlady.[52]

Cook, travelling as a book agent, had visited most of the residents surrounding Harpers Ferry, drawing maps and marking the number of slaves and names of the owners of the plantations.[53] However it was his overenthusiastic tendencies which alarmed Brown and he had to positively forbid Cook from going about among the plantation slaves giving them some hint of the action on their behalf which was impending.[54] Such interference with the slaves would have brought instant action by the slave owners, to whom the possibility of bloddy insurrection was their "firebell in the night."

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47 John Brown owes none of his fame to his spelling.
48 Ibid.
49 I. Smith to J. Henrie, 11 August 1859, Dreer Collection.
50 Villard, 408.
51 The ruins of this old lock still remain on the Maryland shore of the Potomac just west of the new B & O bridge.

That so momentous a secret could not be long contained by the great number of persons who shared it was inevitable. In late August Secretary of War Floyd received an unsigned letter, postmarked Cincinnati, August 23rd, informing him of the intentions of John Brown.[55]

> I have lately received information of a movement of so great importance that I feel it my duty to impart it to you without delay.
>
> I have discovered the existence of a secret association, having for its object the liberation of the slaves at the South by a general insurrection. The leader of the movement is "Old John Brown." late of Kansas. He has been in Canada during the winter, drilling the negroes there, and they are only waiting his word to start for the South to assist the slaves. They have one of their leading men (a white man) in an armory in Maryland--where it is situated I have not been able to learn. As soon as everything is ready, those of their number who are in the Northern States and Canada are to come in small companies to their rendezvous, which is in the mountains of Virginia. They will pass down through Pennaylvania and Maryland, and enter Virginia at Harpers Ferry.... They have a large quantity of arms at their rendezvous.

Because of the mistake of the author in locating the point of attack as an armory in Maryland (rather than in Virginia)[56] and because Floyd did not believe such a nefarious scheme could be entertained by citizens of the United States, he put the letter away and thought no more about it until after the events of October reminded him of the warning.[57]

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52 Bushong, 109. Miss Virginia Kennedy, later Mrs. Virginia Kennedy Cook Johnston, Villard, 638.

53 Williams, I, 287; Bushong, 109, 114.

54 Villard, 408.

55 Mason Report, 250-1.

56 Of this error Floyd declared "that mistake in the statement satisfied me that there was nothing in it." Ibid: 251.

During the blazing, boring days of August, the assembled band grew restive and irritable. Twice there was a near revolt against the planned attack on the Armory, Tidd on one occasion becoming so infuriated that he left Kennedy Farm and stayed with Cook in the village for three days.[58] So serious was the opposition that Brown tendered his resignation as commander-in-chief. From the implication of the letter accepting Brown's continued leadership, it seems that the difficulty arose over the plan of attack, or possibly of the wisdom of assailing property of the United States Government.[59]

57 Mason Report, Testimony of John B. Floyd, 251. The letter, it was later discovered, arose from the confused reasoning of a group of Brown's friends in Iowa. Fearing that he was doomed, they planned to warn the Secretary of War who would in turn increase the guard at the Harpers Ferry Armory which would warn Cook that the plan was known. Cook would warn Brown and Brown would recall his men. Villard, 411-12.

58 Villard, 416.

59 July when the volunteers were informed that the assault at Harpers Ferry would also include the government works is not known. Villard states that the company was on the point of revolting against this action on at least two occasions (416). Sanborn declares that the men were not informed of this part of the plan until October. Sanborn, Frank, "John Brown and His Friends," Atlantic Monthly, July, 1872.

Harpers Ferry, Aug. 18th, 59

Dear Sir
We have all agreed to Sustain your decisions, until you have proved incompetent, and many of us will adhere to your decisions as long as you will.

Your Friend
Owen Smith [60]

From the final section of the statement it would seem that at least a part of the company intended to abide in Brown's leadership regardless of where it might end.

As the unbearably long waiting period lengthened and September arrived, Brown was forced to delay action until more men were forwarded to him and the pikes were received. The famous pikes of the John Brown raid were the leader's own idea. Preparing for a return to Kansas in 1857, he had negotiated with a Connecticut blacksmith to manufacture 1,000 of these weapons--a two edged dirk with an iron blade eight inches long attached to an ash handle six feet long.[61] Originally intended for defense of free-soil settlers in Kansas, Brown was unable to pay for them until the spring of 1859 when he made final arrangements to use tham at Happers Ferry.

John Brown expected that the slaves would flock to his banner immediately upon his march against the slave owners. Unused

60 Dreer Collection.

61 Villard, 283-4.

to weapons, they might not successfully handle rifles. But a thousand men armed with pikes with Brown's trained soldiers providing leadership, would constitute a formidable army.

Finally, well into September, the pikes arrived.[62] Now final preparations were made. The men busied themselves cleaning weapons and fastening the pikeheads to the shafts.[63] Brown and Kagi made a final business trip to Philadelphia. The two women who had contributed so heavily to morale at Kennedy Farm were ordered to leave and on September 30th they had said goodby to John Brown at the Harrisburg railroad station.[64] Immediately the men "sobered down" and girded themselves for the trial ahead.[65]

Still, the full force Brown had hoped to strike with had not yet been received; more might arrive within a few weeks. It was a trying decision for John Brown. The men were restless with their confinement, one of them later declaring that threats were made to Brown of desertions unless action took place immediately.[66] People in

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62 Charles Blair to Messrs. I. Smith & Sons, 27 August 1859, Dreer Collection.

63 Villard, 420.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Anderson, 11.

the vicinity were approaching a "state of excitement" from hints of strange activities around the Kennedy Farm.[67] On October 10th, Kagi, still at Chambersburg wrote to John Brown, Jr., in Ohio, revealing the progress of affairs at Kennedy Farm and the expectations of the outcome of the raid.[68] After noting that funds were exhausted and the men must be given work "or they will find it themselves,"[69] Kagi wrote:

> We will try to communicate with you as soon as possible after we strike, but it may not be possible for us to do so soon. If we succeed in getting news from the outside our own district it will be quite satisfactory, but we have not the most distant hope that it will be possible for us to receive recruits for weeks, or quite likely months to come. We must first make a complete and indisputably open road to the free states. That will require both labor and time.
>
> This is just the right time. The year's crops have been good, and they are now perfectly housed, and in the best condition for use. The moon is just right. Slaves are discontented at this season more than any other.

Kagi very evidently believed in the success of the raid, and the ability of the raiders to hold out in the mountains for weeks or months while opening a way northward for the slaves. This would effectively dispell any doubt that the men under Brown had any notion that the raid was doomed and the participants also. For Kagi was probably the outstanding member of the band. Intelligent, well-read, articulate, he had written for the New York Tribune, Evening Post,

67 Ibid., 26.

68 Brown was forced to borrow money from one of his men to sustain the company in October. Villard, 421.

69 Ibid., 422-3.

and the National Era.[70] Admitting the danger of the operation, the men were hopeful of its success and of the great contribution they felt it would make toward the goal of abolition.

Apparently few if any of Brown's men were drawn into the plot by a natural capacity for violence or lawlessness. Common to all was their hatred of slavery and sympathy for the black man. Some had seen hard service in Kansas, others had no experience with blood-letting. Letters of love and hope between Watson Brown and his young wife are typical of this latter group and tell poignantly of the sincerity of their action.[71] Writing of the injustices to the slaves which he witnessed in the South, Watson said "I cannot come home as long as such things are done here.... I sometimes think perhaps we shall not meet again." Caring for a son born just before Watson's departure, and with her husband poised for a step which might cost his life, she replied "Now Watson keep up good courage and do not worry about me and come back as soon as possible. I think of you all night in my dreams."[72]

70 Ibid., 679; Horace Greely to J. H. Kagi, 30 April 1859, Dreer Collection.

71 Villard, 415-6; Dreer Collection.

72 Isabel Brown to Watson Brown, 14 September 1859, Dreer Collection.

No less moving was the appeal of Dangerfield Newby's slave wife to her husband, to rescue her and the seven children from bondage "as soon as possible, for if you do not get me somebody else will.... Oh, Dear Dangerfield come this fall without fail, money or no money. I want to see you so much: that is the one bright hope I have before me."[73]

Both young Brown and Newby were killed in the fighting at Harpers Ferry.

On Saturday, October 15th the arrival of two colored volunteers, John Copeland and Lewis S. Leary, and Francis Meriam, completed Brown's company.[74] Meriam was a welcome addition. He had arrived at Chambersburg with $600 for the cause, had his will drawn up by the Pennsylvania Political chieftan Alexander H. McClure,[75] and then travelled to Philadelphia and Baltimore to buy military supplies for Brown.[76]

It was a "busy day for all hands," as the men prepared their weapons and readied the extra arms and pikes to be carried down to the Ferry after the attack had been successful.[77] John Brown, as

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73 Document No. 1, 116-7, quoted in Villard, 415.

74 Anderson, 26.

75 McClure, A.K., Abraham Lincoln and Men of War Times, 336.

76 Villard, 421.

77 Anderson, 26.

Commander-In-Chief and H. Kagi as Secretary of War, signed the commissions of the officers marked "Head-Quarters War Department, Near Harpers Ferry, Md." Brown had reached his decision; he would move on Harpers Ferry on the following night. Saturday evening John Brown called his company together and talked with them of the obligations which must be fulfilled.[78]

> You all know how dear life is to you...consider that the lives of others are as dear to them as yours are to you; do not, therefore, take the life of anyone if you can possibly avoid it, but if it is necessary to take life in order to save your own, then make short work of it.

CHAPTER IV

OCTOBER 16, 1859

The daylight hours of Sunday, October 16th, were quiet ones at Kennedy Farm, as the long period of inactivity and uncertainty approached its epic climax. Early in the morning Captain Brown held worship service for his men. The impending attack invoked "deep solemnity" upon the gathering.[1] After breakfast and roll call a final meeting was held in which "matters of importance were considered at length.[2] Everything was in readiness. The attack would be launched under cover of darkness; nineteen men and a wagon could scarcely reach the Ferry undetected during the day.

About eight o'clock that night Brown turned to his followers and said "Men, get on your arms; we will proceed to the Ferry."[3] The men had been ready for hours, now they quickly slung over the shoulder their Sharp's rifles concealed by long gray shawls which served as overcoats.[4] The horse and wagon were brought to the door, in the wagon were placed a few articles which might be needed for the work ahead: a sledge-hammer, a crowbar, some faggots and several pikes.[5]

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1 Anderson, 28.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 31.

4 And for some as winding-sheets, Villard, 426.

5 Ibid.; Anderson, 32.

Captain Owen Brown, and Privates Barclay Coppoc and F. J. Merriam had been designated as the rear-guard. They would, on the following morning, bring the weapons stored at Kennedy Farm down near the Ferry where they might be placed in the hands of the slave army which Brown hoped to raise.

Donning the battered old Kansas cap, symbol of the violence to which he had contributed to heavily in that blood-torn State, Captain Brown mounted the wagon and signalled his 18 men to move out. From the house they moved down the lane and onto the road leading to Harpers Ferry, five miles to the south. In accordance with instructions which had been issued by Brown, as Commander-in-Chief, Captains Tidd and Cook who were better acquainted with the route preceded the main body as scouts, and were to cut the telegraph wires upon reaching Harpers Ferry.[6]

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6 These instructions, contained in a general order read to the men before the raid, presaged the failure of Brown's attempt. While rather carefully planning for the capture of the town and the government works, none of the eleven items gave the slightest indication of Brown having considered the main problem--what steps must be taken to withdraw his command upon the conclusion of the raid, whether successful or unsuccessful in liberating slaves. Each of the objectives listed in the below order (taken in brief from Anderson, 12-13) was achieved:

1. Captain Owen Brown, Meriam, and B. Coppoc to guard farm and arms until morning (of 17th) when they would be joined by others returning from the Ferry; arms then to be removed to school house, three quarters of a mile from Harpers Ferry.
2. March would be in silence, arms kept hidden.
3. Order of march would be two by two.

Silently the men tramped along behind the wagon through the chill drizzle which made even more sinister the gloom of the night.[7] "As if to intensify the sombreness, they met not a living soul on the road to question their purpose, or start with fright at the sight of eighteen soldierly men coming two by two through the darkness as though risen from the grave."

About ten thirty the raiders reached the B & O Bridge across the Potomac.[8] Kagi and Stevens, entrusted with the task of securing the bridge, entered the covered structure encountering William Williams, the watchman, who approached with a lantern. He was made a prisoner and the rest of Brown's men fastening cartridge boxes on the outside of their clothing to be prepared for quick action, followed the wagon onto the bridge.

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4. Captains Tidd and Cook to go ahead of main force and destroy telegraph lines.
5. Captains Kagi and Stevens to take watchman prisoner at Potomac Bridge.
6. Captain Watson Brown and Taylor to take position at Potomac Bridge and hold it until morning, taking prisoner anyone attempting to use bridge.
7. Captains Oliver Brown and W. Thompson ditto at Shenandoah Bridge.
8. Lt. J. Anderson and A. Thompson to occupy engine house with prisoner from bridge and watchman from engine house.
9. Lt. Albert Hazlett and E. Coppoc to hold Armory opposite engine house.
10. Captain Kagi and Copeland to take position at Rifle Factory during night.
11. Col. Stevens with his men to take certain prisoners from surrounding country and "any slaves who would come." Stevens' group to consist of Tidd, O. Anderson, Green and Leary.

7 Featherstonhaugh, 8.

8 Villard, 429. This was a combination railroad and highway bridge.

Reaching Kagi and Stevens, Brown ordered his son Watson and Taylor to take positions on opposite sides of the bridge and to take prisoner anyone who passed over the bridge. With the rest of his force Brown then crossed the bridge to the Virginia shore.[9]

About 10:45 Daniel Whelan, nightwatchman at the U.S. Armory, heard the noise of a wagon coming down the street from the railroad depot.[10] Whelan, thinking it was the head watchman came out from his station in the "watch house."[11]

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9 For capture of the bridge see Anderson, 32-3, Life Trial and Execution, 30 Villard, 429. (Punctuation?)

10 Mason Report, 21. There were no "guards" at the armory. Five watchmen, of which Whelan was one, were on duty during the night to check upon fires in the forges and workshops. Ibid., 53. Brown no doubt was aware of this somewhat loose arrangement for a government armory and probably anticipated little difficulty with the watchmen, who were not armed.

11 John Brown's famous "fort" was a small, brick building, apparently 35½ by 24 feet designed as both "Engine and Guard House." It was divided by a partition into two parts. The western part, with a single door facing north, was the "watchroom" with a stove for the watchmen in cold weather. The eastern portion was the engine room where equipment to fight fires was stored. It was from this (eastern) portion of the "Fort" that Brown and his remaining followers and their hostages were taken by the Marines on Tuesday morning.

Reaching the armory gate Whelan was greeted by the business end of several Sharpe's rifles and a demand to "open the gate."[12] Because of sheer cussedness, or perhaps fright, Whelan refused to open the gate. One of the men brought a crowbar from the wagon, twisted it in the chain which held the two sections of the gate closed, broke the chain and swung open the gate. The wagon was brought into the armory yard and immediately Brown began sending his various details to their appointed tasks.

Soon the raiders brought in the watchman at the Rifle works and several young bloods they had picked up on the town streets.[13] The prisoners were escorted to the watchhouse, which was to welcome a goodly portion of the population of Harpers Ferry within a few hours.

Hazlett and Edwin Coppoc took possession of the unguarded Arsenal and were appointed its temporary garrison.[14] Oliver Brown and William Thompson moved onto the Shenandoah bridge.[15] A group under Stevens made its way to the Rifle Works up the Shenandoah, leaving Kagi and Copeland in possession, Leary joining these men later.[16]

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12 The scene at the gate is from Whelan's testimony before the Mason Committee, Ibid., 21.

13 Ibid., 22.

14 Villard, 430.

15 Anderson, 33.

16 Villard, 431.

About midnight the peaceful occupation was interrupted. Patrick Higgins, a resident of Sandy Hook, arrived at the Potomac bridge to relieve Williams. Finding the bridge dark Higgins called loudly and was answered quietly by Watson Brown and Taylor who suggested obedience on his part might prove salutory to his general welfare. As he was being conducted across the bridge, Higgins suddenly struck one of the men with his fish and ran for the Virginia shore. When he ignored a shouted command to "Halt," the first shot of the raid was fired, the ball grazing his head as he escaped to the Wagner House.[17]

After returning from his capture of the Rifle Works, Stevens led a raiding party to pick up "hostages." The first was to be Col. Lewis W. Washington, who lived off the Charles Town turnpike, about five miles from the Ferry. Col. Washington is one of the foremost characters of the raid; he was selected by Brown as a hostage because of the symbolic possibilities of the sword he possessed, and the name which he bore.

"Colonel" Washington[18] was a great-grandnephew of George Washington, and owned a sword which, according to legend, had been presented to Washington by Frederick the Great in honor of his contribution to American independence. In addition there was a pistol presented

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17 "Now," Higgins later declared, "I didn't know what 'Halt' mint then any more than a hog knows about a holiday." Villard, 433; Barry, 56.

18 Washington was one of the military staff of the Governor of Virginia, from which he derived his military title.

by Lafayette. Brown rather fancied the idea of wearing this sword, once the property of the man who led the fight to free the colonists, as he himself led the fight to free the slaves.[19]

Three Negroes, Shields Green, Osborne Anderson, and Lewis Leary accompanied Stevens and Cook, possibly to add to Washington's discomfiture as well as to assist in another objective of the mission --to bring back any slaves who would come.[20]

Battering down Washington's outer door with a fence rail,[21] the five men summoned their prospective hostage from his bed about 1:30 A.M.[22] Apparently a rather cool customer, Washington checked the arms of the five men to see if they were cocked "and found that they were all cocked."[23]

Submitting to this impressive array, Washington turned over the sword of his legendary ancestor to the Negro Osborne Anderson, another piece of symbolism planned by "Old Osawatomie" that the South "be taught a lesson upon this point."[24]

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19 The weapons had been spotted by Cook who had visited Washington during his scouting trips for Brown previous to the raid.

20 Anderson, 31.

21 Washington's home, in rather poor repair, is still standing.

22 Mason Report, 32.

23 Ibid., 31.

24 Anderson, 31. However Washington won his point on another matter. After announcing their purpose was to "free the slaves" the raiders began to carry off other of Washington's possessions. When asked for his watch, Washington reminded them that their purpose was "philanthropic" not "robbery and rascality." He retained his watch. Mason Report, 32.

Washington was taken out to his carriage, behind which was his farm wagon carrying three of his colored servants.[25] On the way back to Harpers Ferry the procession stopped at the home of John Allstadt, just west of Bolivar Heights,[26] again using the fence-post technique, this time bringing shouts of "Murder" from Allstadt's daughters before he and his eighteen-year old son were placed in the wagon and the party moved on to the Ferry.[27]

While the Stevens party was gathering hostages, the first note of tragedy was sounded by the shooting of a free Negro. About 2:00 A.M. the Baltimore and Ohio passenger train eastbound to Baltimore arrived at Harpers Ferry and was stopped by a clerk at the Wager House who informed the occupants of the recent startling events.[28] Conductor Phelps and a small group of trainmen and passengers walked out onto the bridge to investigate and were halted by Brown's guards and turned back.[29] The train and the passengers spent the night in Harpers Ferry.

25 Ibid., 33.

26 Allstadt's home, since somewhat altered in structure, is also still standing.

27 A somewhat hysterical account of the action at the Allstadt's, as well as succeeding episodes in the drama, is contained in a statement of John Thomas Allstadt to K. Mayo (Villard's research assistant) 15 April 1909, a copy of which is in the possession of C.J.Fairbairn.

28 N.Y. Herald, 19 October 1859.

29 Ibid. Villard adds that the train was backed out of danger. He also declares that the group was fired on and that the trainmen saw the muzzles of four rifles resting on the failing of the bridge, a rather remarkable example of keen sight on a completely dark bridge. 432-3.

Just at this time Heywood Shepherd, hearing noise and confusion on the bridge, went out to investigate.[30] Shepherd was a free negro of excellent character, well-liked by townspeople and indispensable around the train station as baggage-master. Receiving a command to halt, by the bridge guards, Shepherd instead turned back, and was fired upon.[31] The ball passed through his body just below his heart. He died the following afternoon.

The shooting of Shepherd was a grievous sign of the course the raid was to take. The first person shot by the man who had come to free the slaves was a slave already freed.

Between four and five o'clock in the morning the caravan containing the Allstads, Washington, and a number of their slaves arrived back at the Armory.[32] Washington, according to his testimony, had not been seriously disturbed by his somewhat unusual experience, believing that it was "merely a robbing party." But as the wagon passed through the armory gate the driver called out "All's well," receiving a sombre "All's well" from the sentinel at the gate.[33] The raid was proceeding according to plan.

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30 Huhter, "J. B. Raid", Southern Historical Association.

31 Mason Report, 23-4. According to Conductor Phelps' testimony at the trial, he was shot on the Winchester span of the bridge. New York Times, 29 October 1859.

32 Ibid., 24, 36.

33 Mason Report, 34.

The only real attempt to arm slaves and add them to the Provisional Army was made during Sunday night; its execution was desultory, the results completely negative. Brown's stated purpose had been to engage the aid of the slaves during the raid--the 1,000 pikes and 200 Sharpe's rifles he had painstakingly shepherded to Kennedy Farm were designed for use of slaves.

Along with Washington and the Allstadts, seven Negroes had been brought to the engine house, three belonging to Washington, four to Allstadt.[34] While they were given pikes, which had been brought from Kennedy Farm in the wagon, the slaves made no use of the weapons or made any sort of attempt to join Brown's activities. Very shortly they discarded the pikes and took no further part in the proceedings, being particularly anxious to keep as close as possible to the stove in the watchroom.[35]

Brown's purpose in taking the two planters in custody was soon explained to them. Observing protocol befitting the station of his guests, Brown met them outside the engine house and said to Washington "You will find a fire in here, sir; it is rather cool this morning."[36] Then the Kansas veteran made known his purpose. As soon as it became light

34 Mason Report, 35. 41. According to the testimony of Allstadt's son there were no other negroes taken into the enclosure except those of Allstadt and Washington, Statement of John Thomas Allstadt to K.Mayo, 15 April 1909.

35 Mason Report, 42.

36 Mason Report, 34

"I shall require you to write to some of your friends to send a stout, able-bodied negro; I think after a while, possibly, I shall be enabled to release you, but only on the condition of getting your friends to send in a negro man as ransom."[37]

However there were other reasons for choosing Washington as a hostage, Brown continued, as aid to the Governor of Virginia, you will contribute a tremendous moral effect to our cause by reason of your name, and because of your recognized abilities, it would be better not to have you leading the resistance against me.[38]

With the addition of the planters, there were about a half dozen white prisoners in the watch house during Sunday night and early Monday morning.[39]

Shortly after five (?) o'clock Cook took the wagon and led a party across the Potomac bridge to bring the weapons cached at Kennedy Farm down closer to the Ferry.[40] Grimly the remainder of Captain Brown's Provisional Army settled down in the blackness at their respective posts to await the dawn, the last dawn for many of them.

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37 Ibid., Washington's testimony. Col. Washington made no comment on this rather niggardly rate of exchange for one of George Washington's kin.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER XV

THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 17th, 1859

Brown began his activities on the morning of Monday, October 17th, with one of the most unexplainable acts of the raid. Shortly after daylight the B & O passenger train was permitted to leave Harpers Ferry for Baltimore. Conductor Phelps had gone to Brown as day broke and sought permission for his train to continue. Brown not only gave him permission but informed Phelps that notification of this permission had been sent to the conductor at 3:00 A.M.[1]

Somewhat apprehensive of the results which might accompany an attempt by his train to pass the armed guards, Phelps asked "what security" the train would receive. Brown himself walked across the Potomac Bridge in front of the train, the passengers were quickly ordered from the Wager House where they had spent the early morning hours, and the train immediately departed eastward to carry the news of the raid.[2]

Brown's reason for permitting the train's departure, which would immediately alarm not only the civilian authorities of Virginia and Maryland but also the Federal Government in Washington, as the attack

1 New York Times, 27 October 1859.

2 Ibid. The New York Herald 19 October 1859, Villard, 433, says that Phelps had received notice at 3:00 A.M. that he could proceed but would not risk crossing the bridge until daylight.

included holdings of the United States Government, defies explanation. It may be that he wanted the news of his strike against slavery to be broadcast, hoping that it would help rouse the neighboring slaves to his army. Yet, on his arrival at the Ferry the preceeding evening he had immediately cut the telegraph wires to insure his security. While he certainly realized that aid would be quickly forthcoming to the besieged town, and his lieutenants begged him during the day to withdraw before the band was cut off, no attempt by Brown was ever made to withdraw his forces until he was completely cut off.

The weather provided a fitting backdrop to the events of the 17th, with rain continuing at intervals throughout the day.[3] As daylight filtered through the gloom, the arriving workmen of the Armory were gathered in and taken prisoner by Brown's men.

One of the first was James Darrell, aged bell-ringer at the Armory whose duties required him to precede the other workmen.[4] Darrell arrived just before daylight carrying a lantern and was promptly halted by an armed Negro whom Darrell took to be a local gentleman of color well fortified by alcoholic stimulants. The bell-ringer promptly struck his would-be captor with the lantern, consigning his soul to

3 On this point there is general agreement. Life, Trial and Execution, 43, 75, Mason Report, 17, Appendix to message of Governor Wise, 65.

4 The story of Darrell's capture is in Barry, 57-8.

other, balmier parts whereupon a Sharpe's rifle was thrust angrily against his breast and the situation of bell-ringer at the Harpers Ferry Armory seemed likely to be open. However another member of Brown's band struck up the rifle and Brown subsequently released Darrell.

Soon the number of prisoners taken by Brown rapidly accelerated as workmen arrived at the Armory. Brown's method in procuring his prisoners could hardly be termed military in its execution. A number of these citizens, complaining to their captors that they had no breakfast, were permitted to return to their homes for nourishment.[5] Typical of these casual arrangements was the case of John E. P. Dangerfield, paymaster clerk at the Armory.[6]

Dangerfield was summoned about daylight by a servant who told him there was a disturbance in town. Walking to his office at the Armory he was accosted by armed men in "short cloaks"[7] and informed that they had taken over the Government works. Showing rare perception and craftiness, "and fearing something serious was going on, I told the men I believed I would return to my quarters." To his surprise Daingerfield was taken prisoner and placed in the engine house.

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5 Barry, 58-9: Mason Report, 52-4. John Brown Papers, Evidence of Jesse Grimes. When Armistead Ball, master machinist, was accompanied home by two guards, breakfast was not yet ready. He was returned to the Armory and brought back later when breakfast was ready.

6 Daingerfield gave his account in the Century, June, 1885.

7 Probably still wearing the shawls against the rain.

Apparently Stevens at the Rifle Factory had orders to take no prisoners, because he lacked sufficient men to guard them. When Daniel J. Young, master machinist at the Rifle Factory, approached the gate he was met by Stevens' men who warned him that the Armory and Rifle factory were under guard. Young went back, warning mechanics and laborers of the danger.[8]

Thus far, the surprised citizens of Harpers Ferry had offered no resistance to Brown's invasion. Now with the coming of light and spread of information about the raiders' actions, the townspeople began to move against Brown. Chiefly responsible for the alerting of Harpers Ferry and surrounding country was an amazingly alert and resourceful physician, Dr. John D. Starry, whose all night vigil and activities of Monday morning did much to push Brown into a corner.

Starry had been aroused by the shooting of Shepherd early Sunday morning, his room being nearly opposite the railroad bridge. He immediately went to the railroad office and gave medical assistance to the mortally wounded Shepherd. During the remainder of the night Starry was a spectator to the activities of the raiders in the area between the Armory gate and the railroad bridge, talking on a number of occasions with members of Brown's band.[9]

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8 Barry, 63-4.

9 Starry, a cool or excessively inquisitive fellow, had engaged the bridge guards in conversation, asking what their intentions were. To their reply "You will find out in a day or two" Starry quickly asked if that was how long they expected to stay. Although receiving no reply, Starry had gotten a valuable bit of information as to the possible duration of

About five o'clock Starry saw a team and wagon driving over the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bridge, accompanied by five men. This expedition was led by Cook and according to his testimony consisted of himself, Leeman and Tidd and four slaves. Its mission was two-fold--to bring back another hostage[10] and to aid in bringing arms from Kennedy Farm to the school house.[11]

At earliest dawn Starry began efforts to rouse the citizens to their danger. He first awakened the Island of Virginius, then returned to warn A. M. Kitzmiller, acting superintendent of the Armory, that the Armory was in possession of an armed band. Starry then roused several citizens in Bolivar, on his return surveying the situation at Hall's Works.

Starry next ordered the Lutheran Church bell rung to collect the townspeople and ascertain what arms were available, finding one or two squirrel rifles and a few shot guns, nothing fit for use. From the foreman of the Armory he learned that all of the guns were in the arsenal and in possession of the raiders.[12]

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10 Terence Byrne (?) who lived in Maryland along the route to Kennedy Farm.

11 Cooke's confession in Life, Trial and Execution, 104-5.

12 Brown's purpose in seizing the government works is not clear. It may have been to prevent use of stored rifles against him by the townspeople. No attempt to use the stored weapons was made by Brown's army.

Starry had already sent a messenger to Charles Town to alert the militia company there, he also sent messengers to the B & O railroad to stop eastward bound trains. Feeling it futile to face the raiders without arms, Starry headed for Charles Town to hurry up the departure of the militia, having done excellent service in view of the bewilderment of the majority of the people at Harpers Ferry.[13]

By about seven o'clock that morning, sufficient residents had found arms to begin hostilities against the invaders and soon on the streets near the Armory shots were being exchanged. The corner of High and Shenandoah, a hot spot all during the 17th, was the site of a bloodless encounter at an early hour.

Alexander Kelley, armed with a shotgun, approached this corner with the idea of taking a few shots at the invaders. As he turned the corner, only 100 feet from the Armory, several shots greeted him, one ball piercing his hat. No further word on Mr. Kelley is recorded.[14]

Shortly after Kelley retired Thomas Boerly, a townsman, approached the same corner. Boerly, a man of great physical strength and courage, opened fire on a group of the raiders standing at the Arsenal gate diagonally opposite the Armory gate. In the exchange, Boerly suffered a "ghastly" wound in the groin, from which he died, shortly afterward.[15]

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13 See Starry's testimony before the Mason Committee, Mason Report, 23-7.

14 Barry, 59.

15 Ibid., 59-60.

Recovering from the shock of Brown's invasion, and spurred by Boerly's death, the people of Harpers Ferry began to organize against the raiders and to make a determined search for arms. Apparently few were found, although Barry records that a number of guns had been removed to a building on high ground during a previous freshet and this source supplied arms enough for the small companies of townsmen which were organized. Still there was the problem of ammunition. One account describes the melting and molding of pewter plates and spoons for bullets.[17] Enough guns were secured by the people to keep up a desultory fire against the raiders during the morning.[18]

During the interval after Boerly's death another singular scene of the drama was enacted. Having made no provision for food, Brown decided to secure sustenance for both his men and his prisoners. Releasing Walter "Watty" Kemp, infirm bartender at the Wager House who had been captured earlier, Brown ordered him to take charge of bringing forty-five breakfasts from the Wager House, the released bartender being the only pay Brown offered. The proprietor felt the bargain deserved only twenty breakfasts, which he sent to Brown in the engine

17 Boteler, Alexander, "John Brown Raid," Century, 1883.

18 Barry, 64-5.

house. However few of the prisoners helped themselves to the breakfasts, Washington, Allstadt, Brown himself and many others fearing that the food might be drugged or poisoned.[19]

During the morning of the 17th Brown made no apparent move to do anything but sit tight and await developments. He could, at that time, have easily crossed the Potomac bridge and headed for the mountains. He could have attempted to carry out his original mission of freeing the slaves by sending patrols of his men into the plantations of the surrounding countryside. While he had directed his store

19 Mason Report, 40; Barry, 62. Confusion as to who should pick up the breakfast check was not settled until some time after Brown's capture. Sheriff Campbell had sold some of Brown's property at Kennedy Farm and was accounting to Brown for the payment to creditors he had made with the proceeds, provoking one of the few attempts at humor by John Brown. Upon hearing that the proprietor of the Wager House (Mr. Fouke) claimed payment for the breakfasts Brown declared "Why, Mr. Campbell, I made a fair exchange with Mr. Fouke; I restored to him his bartender as pay for the meals referred to." Barry, 81.

of arms to be brought down close to the north shore of the Potomac River, he made no attempt to utilize this store which he had worked so hard to accumulate and transport. Instead, he waited. As he waited, the forces which would soon overwhelm him gathered.

At 7:55 AM., W. P. Smith, master of transportation of the B & O railroad received at Baltimore a dispatch from conductor Philps of the delayed passenger train at Monacacy which was so incredible as to defy belief.[20] "Express train bound east, under my charge, was stopped this morning at Harper's Ferry by armed abolitionists." They number "about one hundred and fifty strong" who have come "to free the slaves," Phelps reported.[21] "Notify the Secretary of War at once."

Unawed by the terrifying evidence of his conductor, Smith waited a full hour and then wired back rather placidly at 9:00 AM. "Your dispatch is evidently exaggerated and written under excitement. Why should our trains be stopped by Abolitionists, and how do you know they are such and that they number one hundred or more?" Phelps, somewhat put out, replied that he would call at Smith's office on his arrival and "tell you all."[22]

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20 Record of dispatches between Phelps and Smith and subsequent messages of the B & O are found in Document Y, Correspondence Relating to the Insurrection at Harpers Ferry published by the Maryland legislature in 1860.

21 Ibid., 5.

22 Ibid., 5-6.

But Phelps' dispatch had been seen by John W. Garrett, president of the B & O who took immediate action. By ten thirty he had informed Governor Wise of Virginia, Maj. Gen. George H. Stewart, commanding the First Light Division of Maryland Volunteers in Baltimore, Secretary of War Floyd, and President Buchanan, informing them that an insurrection involving the negroes was taking place in Harpers Ferry and calling upon Buchanan to send United States troops.[23]

In addition, the news had quickly traveled from Monacacy to Frederick, a short distance away, and by ten o'clock the militia company of that place was under arms.[24] Brown had only the few hours remaining before noon to effect an escape. But Brown continued to direct activities at the Ferry with no apparent thought of outside forces which would surely be launched against him once the alarm had been broadcast by the train he had permitted to escape. Still, few people would have expected the volunteer companies from surrounding towns to respond as quickly as they were to do.

By mid-morning Brown had confined upwards of thirty prisoners in the engine house.[25] The raiders still were in control of both river bridges and the Armory, as well as the Rifle Works along the Shenandoah.

23 Ibid., 8-9.

24 Villard, 434.

25 A disputed point however. Life, Trial and Execution, Villard, 437.

On the Maryland side Cooke and Leeman had gone to the home of Terence Byrne, two miles north of the Ferry, whom they took prisoner, Tidd and the slaves proceeded to Kennedy Farm, loaded the wagon with weapons, and brought them down to the school house. Tidd and the slaves went back to Kennedy Farm for another load, Cook remained at the school house and Leeman took Byrne to Brown at the engine house.[26] William Thompson had been dispatched from the Ferry, shortly before to report that the party had peaceful possession of the town and with directions for the men to continue moving the weapons, Thompson shortly returning to the Ferry.[27]

Continuing to keep in communication with his somewhat scattered force Brown sent Jeremiah Anderson to Hall's Works for a report from Kagi who was in command of that sector. Kagi sent back a message advising that the town be evacuated immediately. Brown's reply was for Kagi to continue to hold.[28]

And as Brown marked time, his grace period, during which he could have withdrawn across the Potomac, quickly ebbed away. Why he should have done this is difficult to decide. It may be that he wished

26 Cooke's Confession, Life, Trial and Execution, 104-5.

27 Anderson, 38.

28 Ibid., 42.

to give the negroes from the surrounding country more time to flock to his banner.[29] Later, Brown declared that it was because of the solicitude for his prisoners that he held fast until it was too late.[30]

Brown of course meant that he feared for the safety of his prisoners if he had attempted to fight his way to safety, while continuing to keep the prisoners in custody. Had he set his hostages free the safety of his hostages would have been guaranteed.

It may well be that Brown had taken and held this large body of Harpers Ferry citizens with an eye to their future use, anticipating that if cut off, he could bargain for the safe passage of his men. This seems a possible answer, as Brown later in the day, entered into negotiations with the militia to permit him to cross into Maryland, where he would release the prisoners.

In mid-morning, before general firing broke out between townspeople and raiders, Brown entered into negotiations for the release of his prisoners, and the terms were carried to the townsmen by a delegation of prisoners. However the terms, including a demand for undisputed position of the Armory,[31] were rejected.[32] Shortly afterward the citizens had gotten possession of a quantity of arms and opened a general fire on Brown's men which was promptly returned.[33]

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29 A.R. Boteler, riding along the fields as he made his way from Shepherdstown to Harpers Ferry that morning, noted that the slaves were working in the fields as usual. loc. cit.

30 Villard, 438.

31 Ibid.

32 Testimony of Benjamin Illls (one of the prisoners) at Brown's Trial, Life, Trial and Execution,80.

33 Villard, 438 places the time at shortly after 10:00 o'clock.

But of greater concern to the Provisional Army than the somewhat erratic fire of the frightened civilians was the action of the militia from surrounding towns who were quickly organizing to move on Harpers Ferry. Col. John T. Gibson, a Mexican War veteran commanding militia forces at Charles Town, learned of Brown's action Monday morning.[34] He immediately ordered out the "Jefferson Guards" and by ten o'clock, the militiamen, numbering about one hundred men, entrained at Charles Town.[35]

Arriving shortly at Halltown, Gibson learned that the insurgents were in "large numbers" and at once sent orders to Col. L. T. Moore, commanding Frederick County (Md.) militia to reinforce immediately.[36] The Guards left the train at Halltown, marched over "School House Hill,"[37] to Allstadt's crossroads.[38]

From the crossroads, about two miles from Harpers Ferry, Davis ordered Capt. J. W. Rowan to take the Jefferson Guards and secure

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34 Undoubtedly from Starry, who had ridden there to carry the alarm. According to his testimony before the Mason Committee he probably arrived about 8:00 A.M. Mason Report, 25-6.

35 Report of Col. Gibson to Gov. Wise, Appendix to Document I, 61.

36 Ibid.

37 The hill on the Charles Town road just west of Bolivar Heights.

38 In the valley between Bolivar Heights and School House Hill, location of residence of John Allstadt, one of Brown's hostages.

the Potomac River bridge.[39] Rowan led the company from Allstadt's crossroads to the Potomac, crossing on gondolas and miscellaneous river vehicles, and marched down the towpath of the C & O canal to the B & O bridge at Harpers Ferry, Brown's only escape route.[40]

Continuing to Harpers Ferry, which he reached about 11:30, Col. Gibson made further military preparations.[41] A company of citizens under Capt. Batts was directed railroad tracks, and take possession of the Galt House, located in rear of the Arsenal and commanding the entrance to the Armory yard. Capt. John Avis was commanded with a small group of men to move down by the Catholic Church and take possession of the houses along Shenandoah Street which commanded the Arsenal yard. Other detachments of militia were then sent to take possession of the W & P spur of the B & O bridge, the Shenandoah River bridge, and Shenandoah Street leading to Hall's Rifle Works.

About noon, the various companies moved to carry out Gibson's instructions. With little difficulty the Jefferson Guards drove Oliver Brown and his men from the B & O bridge, back into the Armory yard. In its first action the Charles Town militia performed its most important function of the entire raid, cutting off Brown's retreat route to Kennedy Farm. On reaching the Harpers Ferry shore, the Guards

39 Life Trial and Execution, 41. An excellent bit of strategy, especially since Gibson had not yet arrived to survey the situation at the Ferry.

40 Hunter, Andrew, "John Brown Raid", Southern Historical Association Review, 191-7.

41 Gibson to Wise, Appendix to Document I, 61.

immediately entered the Wager House, which commanded the entrance to the Armory and protected the bridge.

The work of Captains Botts and Avis is recorded in a letter from D. E. Henderson to David Hunter Strother (Porte Crayon)[42]:

> Captain John Avis formed a company and was directed to send a portion of his men across the Shenandoah bridge and defend it. The rest of it to go up and occupy a position above Hall's works and, if possible, to storm the works.
>
> Captain Lawson Botts asked for 20 men to follow him to take possession of the Galt House from which he proposed to defend the railroad bridge. 12 o'clock 30 or 40 stepped forward (I was one of the number) and came down the hill near the Presbyterian Church, crossed to the banks of the Shenandoah, the streets leading to the bridge being in the hands of the insurgents. We supposed that there were 200 of them. Went down the bank of the Shenandoah and climbed up the wall, about 30 feet high, just above the bridge (Potomac) and got into the cellar window of the Galt House, breaking in the window with the butt of a musket, and coming up a trap door just as George Chambers, who was in the Galt House, shot one of their sentinels who was on the bridge trying to get a shot at some one in the hotel.[43]

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42 Copy from original in possession of Boyd B. Stutler.

43 George Chambers, saloon-keeper of the Galt House, is generally agreed to have shot Stevens later on in the raid. Whether the above description is actually the shooting of Dangerfield Newby is doubtful. See Villard, 640, n.26.

As the bridge detachment consisting of Oliver Brown, Dangerfield Newby and William Thompson, was driven from the structure to the Armory entrance, some sixty yards away, Newby was shot and instantly killed.[44] He was the first of the Provisional Army to die at Harpers Ferry.

Brown's position shortly after noon on the 17th was already a desperate, if not hopeless one. Of the twenty-22 man army were on the Maryland shore, but off from him as he was cut off by the Jefferson Guards from crossing back into Maryland. In the Arsenal, across Shenandoah Street from the Armory, were , already cut off from the main body. At Hall's Rifle Works, a half mile away from the Armory, Brown's chief lieutenant, Kagi, along with were likewise cut off from the main body and in imminent danger of being overwhelmed. In the Armory Brown had of the original band, William Leeman, William Thompson. Perhaps 200 armed men were already organized against him in Harpers Ferry. From surrounding towns, from the Federal Government in Washington, troops were being despatched to smash this attack on Harpers Ferry.

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44 Villard, 439. A tragic sequel to the letter he received from his slave wife while at Kennedy Farm "Oh, Dear Dangerfield come this fall without fail, money or no money (to buy her and the children from bondage). I want to see you so much: that is the one bright hope I have before me." Ibid., 415. Newby's body was subjected to "shocking indignities." Ibid., 439.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF OCTOBER 17th, 1859

Brown's action immediately after the arrival of the first contingents of the militia would indicate that he preferred to bring on no general hostilities. Sending one of his prisoners, Rezin Cross, along with William Thompson,[1] he asked for a truce and a cessation of the firing, with the hope that he might be able to successfully bargain for the release of his prisoners in return for safe conduct out of Harpers Ferry. However Thompson was taken prisoner and hustled into the Wager House, no attention being paid to his request for a truce.[2]

As the militia and townsmen closed in on the Armory, William Leeman attempted to escape across the river before the raiders were completely cut off.[3] Moving to the upper end of the Armory he dashed into the water, comparatively shallow at this point, and attempted to make his way across to the Maryland shore. He was soon spotted and heavy fire broke out, forcing him to take refuge on one of the small islets in the river at this point. A resident of the town waded out, refusing Leeman's surrender, and shot and killed him.[4] For the remainder of the day his body was a target for undisciplined militiamen and townspeople.

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1 Life, Trial and Execution, 76. Barry, 66, states that Cross was one of the hostages accompanying Stevens and Watson Brown on a later truce expedition.

2 Villard, 439.

3 For the killing of Leeman, see Villard, 440.

4 Who was apparently unarmed. At eighteen, he was the youngest member of Brown's army.

As the situation worsened, Brown sent his son Watson and Aaron Stevens under a flag of truce along with Mr. Kitzmiller, acting superintendent of the Armory, and another prisoner.[5] Apparently directed by Brown to negotiate with the militiamen for permission to evacuate the town, Watson Brown and Stevens, along with the two hostages proceeded towards the bridge. As they came opposite the Galt House several shots were fired despite the truce flag and both raiders fell.[6]

Stevens was severely wounded, probably by George W.(?) Chambers the Galt salon-keeper (?).[7] Lying bleeding in the street, his life was saved by the action of Joseph A. Brua, a gallant townsman all during that day, who, a prisoner in the engine house, volunteered to go to Stevens' aid, carrying him into the Wager House for medical attention.[8] Watson Brown, mortally wounded, crawled back through the Armory gate to the engine house.

With two of his men killed and two badly wounded within minutes of each other, and facing a determined and angry group of men, Brown was forced either to prepare for a fight to the finish, or to bargain for safe conduct across the river. He attempted to do both.

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5 Barry, 66.

6 Ibid.

7 Villard, 439. In the Civil War Chambers served as a Captain in the 2nd Va. Infantry of the Stonewall Brigade, of which "K" Company was raised in Harpers Ferry. Military Operations in Jefferson County, 1.

8 Villard, 440.

When the Charles Town militia had captured the bridge, Brown had retreated with his men to the engine house,[9] occupying both the watch room and engine house. At this time he had perhaps thirty or forty prisoners confined there.[10] Now he proposed to take the more important hostages, who might be used for bargaining with the militia, into the main engine house room along with his swindling (?) band.[11] Brown chose eleven of the citizens and took them into the engine house proper. The remainder were placed in the watch room.[12] To safeguard them against musket fire Brown placed them to the rear against the wall, his men to the front at the two doors.[13]

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9 Washington estimated Brown's strength at this time as eight men. Mason Report, 37.

10 Ibid., 36.

11 Apparently many of the prisoners were not confined but kept under guard in the Armory yard until this time.

12 Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, in his report to the Mason Committee, Ibid., 41, lists ten hostages: Col. Washington, J.H.Allstadt, Israel Russel, John Donahue, Terence Byrne, George D. Shope, Benjamin Mills, A. M. Ball, J. E. P. Daingerfield, and J. Burd. Allstadt's son was, according to his account, among the select group, making a total of eleven.

13 Ibid., 45.

Shortly after Brown's final disposition of his men, another citizen was killed. George W. Turner, prominent planter of the vicinity, was shot by one of Brown's men and instantly killed, in just what place and manner is not known.[14]

By mid-afternoon, with the arrival of volunteers from nearby farms and villages, unorganized, partially armed men were in possession of the town, and while many took care to keep out of range of Brown's men, they contributed to the general hysteria and excitement. Medicinal treatments at the bars of the Galt House and Wager House did nothing to calm the temper of the crowd. With the shooting of several townspeople during the afternoon, the fury of the men accelerated.

The act which drove the citizens into a frenzy was the killing of Fountaine Beckham, Mayor of Harpers Ferry and agent of the B&O railroad. Beckham, a well-liked man of somewhat high-strung temperament, had been greatly upset by the shooting of Heyward Shepherd, who had been his faithful helper at the railroad depot.[15] Despite warnings from his friends to keep away, Beckham walked back and forth along the trestle

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14 Villard, 441.

15 The shooting of Beckham was another ironical act of Brown's raid, whose objective was freeing the slave negroes. At the time of his death Beckham had made arrangements in his will to help a negro purchase the freedom of his wife and three children, and was generally noted for his sympathy for the plight of the slaves. Ibid., 442.

of the B & O which borders the Armory yard about thirty yards from the engine house. According to the statement of young Allstadt, Beckham would not have been in danger had it not been for his "equivocal appearance" in peering around the water tower at the engine house.[16] As Edward Coppoc prepared to fire on Beckham one of the prisoners screamed "Don't fire, man, for God's sake! They'll shoot in here and kill us all."[17] But Coppoc's shot pierced Beckham's heart. As Oliver Brown took aim at another man on the trestle, he was struck by a ball and mortally wounded. Both of Brown's sons now lay dying beside their father.

The angry townspeople, goaded by the death of Beckham, now turned on the prisoner they had taken earlier, William Thompson. Led by Henry Hunter[18] a crowd of men stormed the Wager House where Thompson was being held. As they attempted to seize Thompson, Miss Christina Fouke,[19] sister of the proprietor, shielded Thompson from their guns with her body. Pushing her aside Thompson was dragged from the hotel onto the B & O bridge. A rope not being available his body was riddled by rifle fire and dropped into the Potomac where his remains, as were Leeman's, served as a target for infuriated men during the remainder of the day.[20]

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16 Statement of Allstadt to K. Mayo, 15 April 1909.

17 Ibid. Miss Christina Fouke of the Wager House and a colored porter later carried Beckham's body from the train platform. Leech, The Raid as I Saw It, 9.

18 Son of Andrew Hunter, special prosecutor for the State of Virginia against John Brown at the trial. It was the painful duty of the father to bring these facts to light from his son during the course of the trial.

19 The Wager House was also known as "Fouke's Hotel."

20 New York Herald, 31 October 1859; Barry, 69; Life, Trial and

Meanwhile as Brown's army was being decimated in the vicinity of the engine house, his detachment holding Hall's Rifle Works came under fire. Headed by Kagi, the three men had remained in possession of the works unmolested during the morning and early afternoon. Separated from the main party by half a mile, with no food, and their pleas for Brown to evacuate the town ignored, they awaited orders.

Dr. Starry, recently arrived from Charles Town where he had activated that town's militia, quickly changed clothes and entered again into the festivities. Apparently disappointed with the determination shown by the townspeople in crushing the invasion and remembering the crew of raiders he had seen in Hall's works early that morning, he informed a group of his fellow townsmen of this opportunity, commenting that "if they wanted to show their bravery they could go there."[21] Starry organized a group of "citizens and neighbors" and headed up the Shenandoah.

The assault was launched against Kagi and his men from the Shenandoah Street side of Hall's works. After an exchange of shots the three raiders holding the works retreated "out the back way towards the Winchester railroad, climbed out on the railroad and into the Shenandoah River."[22]

21 Mason Report, 27.

22 Ibid.

A party of townspeople were posted along the opposite shore of the river and as they spotted the fleeing raiders a warning shot went up and they opened fire.[23] The Shenandoah at this point although wide is shallow, the bottom covered with shelves of rock and was easily forded.[24] Caught between the two forces, the raiders (fires?) made for a large flat rock in the middle of the river. Before reaching the rock Kagi, Brown's most trusted and able lieutenant, was killed. Leary, mortally wounded was later carried into a carpenter shop in the "Island" and died there in great agony several hours later.[25]

With Copeland standing alone on the rock James H. Holt, a resident of Harpers Ferry rushed out to capture the single survivor of this section of Brown's army. Copeland leveled his gun as Holt approached, and Holt stopped in the river and returned the salute, but neither fired.[26] Reaching Copeland, Holt clubbed his gun but Copeland

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23 Boteler, Alexander "The John Brown Raid," Century, 1883.

24 Ibid.

25 Featherstonehaugh, Thomas, Men, 18. Dr. Stephen B. Weeks, in an article on "The Lost Colony of Roanoke: Its Fate and Survival," Vol. V of American Historical Association Papers, presents evidence that Leary was a descendant of the colony of Englishmen left on Roanoke Island in one of Raleigh's efforts to colonize the New World, Ibid., 18n.

26 Boteler, loc cit. Boteler later learned that priming was wet in both pieces and couldn't be fired.

dropped his weapon and surrendered, and was quickly dragged ashore. Despite preparations of an excited crowd to lynch him he was taken away to jail.[27]

The situation in the vicinity of the engine house had become static by mid-afternoon, occasional shots being exchanged between the remnants of Brown's army and assorted militia and townsmen. While possessing numbers sufficient to overwhelm Brown, the latter were content to await further developments and reinforcements. These arrived about 3:00 P.M., shortly after the affair at Hall's Works.

27 Ibid. Copeland, a free negro, enlisted for John Brown by his Uncle Leary, while attending Oberlin College. A letter written by him to his parents while awaiting execution, which reveals his deep feeling concerning the liberation of his race, is quoted partially in Villard, 684.

> Dear Parents,--my fate as far as man can seal it is sealed, but let this not occasion you any misery for remember the cause in which I was engaged, remember that it was a 'Holy Cause', one in which men who in every point of view better than I am have suffered and died, remember that if I die I die in trying to liberate a few of my poor and oppress people from my condition of serveatude....

A militia company from Martinsburg, hastily organized upon receiving news of Brown's raid, chiefly composed of tonnage men from the B & O and headed by Captain E. G. Alburtis, a veteran of the Mexican War, arrived by rail and moved on Brown's position from the upper end of the Armory yard.[28] This attack was conducted with spirit and determination and had it been sustained by the other elements who watched the action Brown and his men might have been taken capture.

Captain Alburtis directed twenty-five men to flank the Armory grounds along Potomac Street, twenty five to move through the Armory yard and the remainder to proceed through the shops, the whole moving from west to east, from the upper section of the Armory toward the engine house.[29]

Moving briskly toward Brown's fort, amid a steady fire opened upon them by the raiders, the Martinsburg company forced those outside the engine house to withdraw to the inside, keeping the door open a few inches for a loophole. "Thirty or forty" prisoners were still remaining in the watch room (which was on the end of the engine house closest to Alburtis' approach) and the militia quickly broke the windows and brought them to safety. Suffering eight wounded during the operation. Captain Alburtis reported "we were not supported by the other companies."[30]

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28 Document Y, 17; Richmond Enquirer 25 October 1859.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

Somewhat disconcerted by the casualties which had been inflicted, and realizing the difficulty of assaulting the fort, Alburtis' men retreated to a safe distance and added their numbers to those already keeping watch. Shortly thereafter other militia companies began to arrive in Harpers Ferry, all adding to the indescribable confusion and hysteria but none undertaking any advance upon Brown's men.

Between three and four in the afternoon two companies from Shepherdstown, like the Martinsburg company organized a few hours before, the "Hamtramck Guards" and the "Shepherdstown Troop" entered the town.[31] Several hours later a company from Winchester under R. B. Washington joined the rapidly growing investment force.

Maj. Gen. George H. Steuart of Baltimore had immediately organized his command upon learning of the events[32] at Harpers Ferry and shortly after 3:00 o'clock that afternoon five companies entrained before a cheering crowd at Baltimore.[33]

On the other side of the Potomac, Brown's rear guard force was becoming alarmed at the heavy firing from the direction of the Ferry. Cook decided to investigate and headed down the road for the Ferry. On

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31 Life, Trial and Execution. 41.

32 Scharf, J. T., History of Maryland, III, 279.

33 Williams, History of Washington County, I, 292. The command numbered about 225, joined the Marines at Relay and reached Harpers Ferry shortly after midnight.

the way he learned that Brown's men had been cut off in the town. Near the B & O bridge, Cook ascended Maryland Heights part way where he could get a good view of the Armory yard, directly across the river. Seeing men in the houses along High Street firing down on his companions in the engine house, Cook opened fire on them and when they replied he was badly bruised by a fall down the slope of the mountain, occasioned by a near miss.[34]

Cook then returned to the school house meeting the remainder of his group on the way. They had been at Kennedy Farm between two and three that afternoon when a "black man" had ridden up with a request for them to come down to the Ferry and help out the badly outnumbered Provisional Army. Owen Brown, Coppoc, and Francis Meriam immediately put the house tidy and hiked in the rain toward Harpers Ferry. About dusk they met Tidd who told them there was no chance to help the men in the Ferry, that they could not possibly escape.[35]

Upon meeting Cook, they decided to return to the school house and discover what had become of the liberated slaves who had been left to guard the weapons stored there. Approaching the building with caution, they found it deserted. They quickly collected provisions and headed back for Kennedy Farm where they ate a hasty supper, in fear that the militia from Harpers Ferry would be sent to investigate the former base of the raiders. Fearing that they might be trapped in the building if they stayed

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34 Life, Trial and Execution.

35 This account is from Keeler, "Owen Brown's Escape," Atlantic Monthly, March, 1874. There are some serious discrepancies as to the career of the Kennedy Farm group.

the night they camped nearby on the side of the mountain in order to assist any of their fellow raiders who might escape and head back to Kennedy Farm for aid.[36]

As resistance became partially organized at Harpers Ferry, steps were taken to seal off any possibility of support reaching Brown. Fearing that Brown's action in Harpers Ferry might be part of a general uprising, all approaches to the town were guarded and all travellers not recognized by residents of the area were immediately arrested and hustled to the county jail at Charles Town, many being somewhat inhospitably treated. Passengers on the B & O contributed to this group.[37]

Brown was hopelessly trapped now, and in the short time remaining, with the militia showing no indication of assaulting him, he attempted to bargain with them, for safe conduct of his men in return for the liberation of his hostages.

Brown, according to the multitudinous articles, depositions, and accounts later given by his prisoners, never entertained the idea of threatening to harm the hostages if he was not permitted to escape. Daingerfield testified at the trial that he had "no personal fear of him or his men during his confinement."[38] Except for being restricted

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36 Ibid.

37 Rosengarten, John G., "John Brown's Raid," Atlantic Monthly, June 1865.

38 Life, Trial and Execution, 79. Daingerfield observed that he "was not a vicious man, but was crazed upon the subject of slavery." Daingerfield, J.E.P., " " The Century, June, 1885. Benjamin Mills, master-armorer testified "we were treated kindly." Life, Trial and Execution, 76.

as to their liberty, none of the prisoners were ill-used. Washington testified that Brown advised them to keep back from the doors where they might be hit by a stray ball and at no time did he threaten the safety of the prisoners or suggest using them as shields in case of assault.[39]

Only one of the two large doors of the main engine house was opened, this a few inches to admit a rifle barrel.[40] "Phil," one of Allstadt's slaves, was put to work knocking loop holes through the brick walls of the fort.[41] According to the New York Times Brown had put Phil to work knocking out a loophole when a brisk fire opened on the engine house from the outside, whereupon he announced "This is getting too hot for Phil" and dropped the tools, Brown finishing the job.[42]

The militia were afraid to fire through loopholes for fear of hitting the hostages.[43] None of the raiders were killed at the loopholes, only at the door, although they occasionally fired through the loopholes.[44]

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39 Ibid., 37, 40. Several testified that Brown repeatedly warned his men not to fire on unarmed citizens.

40 Mason Report, 45.

41 Four such loopholes were so made, according to Col. Washington in Ibid., 35. Pictures of the engine house after the raid show what seems to be a rebricked section, probably repairing a loophole, between the two doors of the main engine house.

42 29 October 1859.

43 Leech, 9.

44 Mason Report, 45.

The negotiations which Brown instigated in order to effect the release of himself and his men were unsuccessful. In general Brown made a series of propositions, both verbal and written, in which he promised that if he were permitted to march across the bridge unmolested, he would release the prisoners, from there on his safety to be determined by his own ability to get away.[45] Some of these messages were written and signed by the prisoners themselves, A.M.Ball, master machinist, noting that the prisoners realized their danger when an attempt would be made to assault the engine house--in which friend and foe might suffer together--and that almost any proposition was acceptable to them as apparently they were perfectly confident that Brown would protect them.[46]

Col. Baylor, who received such a verbal message from Brown, sent back word that if the prisoners were immediately set free, he would let the government deal with Brown. Shortly before nightfall Col. Baylor received a written communication from Brown, announcing his terms.[47]

> In consideration of all my men, whether living or dead, or wounded, being soon safely in, and delivered up to me at this point, with all their arms and ammunition, we will then take our prisoners and cross the Potomac bridge, a little beyond which we will set them at liberty; after which we can negotiate about the government property as may be best. Also, we require the delivery of our horse and harness at the hotel.

45 Baylor Report, Appendix to Governor Wise's message to Virginia Assembly, 64.

46 Life, Trial and Execution, 73.

47 Ibid., 42.

Baylor rejected this offer and "It was now near nightfall and the gathering floom of a drizzly evening began to obscure surrounding objects, making it so difficult to distinguish them that, as if by common consent on both sides, active operations were suspended."[48]

While the quasi-military operations ended with nightfall, participants testified to the continuation of non-military activities with ever increasing fervor. Many men were intoxicated, firing into the air as well as at the engine house.[49] The "wildest excitement" continued throughout the town during the night.[50] Several hundred militiamen milled about, anxious and hysterical relatives and friends of the hostages and of the wounded and dead were present. After an all-day rain the atmosphere was raw and cold--the night itself was cloudy, moonless, "dismal."[51]

Admidst this confusion, two of Brown's Provisional Army were able to make their escape, the only members of his party who were able

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48 Boteler, loc. cit. Shortly after night fell, Captain Sinn, arriving with the Frederick militia, went into the engine house and talked with Brown who told him that "he [Brown] had weighed the responsibility and should not shrink from it." Villard, 447.

49 Life, Trial and Execution, 81.

50 Barry, 71.

51 Ibid.

to get out of the town after the bridge had been closed. Albert Hazlett and Osborn Anderson had been assigned the task of holding the Arsenal, a group of buildings diagonally across Shenandoah Street from the Armory gate. In the excitement centering around the engine house all day Monday, this two-man garrison at the Arsenal had apparently been overlooked or forgotten. After dark, the two made their way across the Potomac to Kennedy Farm.[52] Anderson, who escaped into the North, later declared that, following Brown's capture, realizing that nothing could be done to help, they left the Arsenal, hid for several hours on the hill overlooking the Shenandoah in the vicinity of present day Storer College, then found an old boat along the Potomac and crossed into Maryland. This may have been their itinerary but it was doubtless executed in the dark of Monday evening. A boat crossing the Potomac on Tuesday would have instantly attracted an interested audience.

The Kennedy Farm detachment (Tidd, Cook, Merriam, Owen Brown and a negro) was not waiting to assist the escapees, however. They had camped on a hill near the farm in order to render assistance to other members of the band, but in the night they awoke to find the negro had fled. Fearing the alarm might be spread, and somewhat anxious in any case to get an early start,[53] they quickly assembled their belongings and headed north.

52 Villard, 446, agrees that Anderson's story that the escape was made in full daylight on Tuesday after the capture of Brown, is difficult to believe.

53 Keeler, loc. cit.

But the most important event for the future of John Brown that night was the result of a series of events that day in Washington.[54] Lt. J.E.B.Stuart, United States Army, was at the War Department on Army business on the morning of October 17th and while there was asked to convey a secret communication to Lt.Col. Robert E. Lee at his home in Arlington,[55] which communication ordered Lee to report to the War Department immediately. The government had received news of the mysterious insurrection from President John W. Garrett of the B & O--that trains were being stopped, citizens fired upon, and strangers in great numbers inciting the slaves to rebellion. This was of course extremely dangerous to Washington because of the government arms plant in Harpers Ferry. Troops had already been ordered from Fort Monroe, the service of the Virginia militia had been accepted, the only troops immediately available, a detachment of Marines at the Washington naval yard, had been ordered to the besieged town. Lee was to command all forces at Harpers Ferry. After a conference with Secretary of War Floyd and President Buchanan, Lee immediately left for Relay House and Harpers Ferry. Lt. Stuart, scenting excitement, had received permission to accompany Lee, who, in the hurry of departure, had no time to return home and don a uniform.[56]

54 A good account of this feature of the Brown raid is in Freeman, Douglas S., R. E. Lee, I, 394-5, from which the above is taken.

55 McClelland, 28.

56 Lee was not so well acquainted with J.E.B.Stuart then as he was to be a few years later, spelling his name "Stewart" in his official report. Mason Report, 40-43.

The ninety marines, under immediate command of Lt. Israel Green, had left Washington at 3:30 P.M., taking along two howitzers,[57] and awaited Lee's arrival at Sandy Hook, a mile east of Harpers Ferry.[58] Lee arrived about 10:30 P.M. aboard his special train, formed the marines and marched into Harpers Ferry.[59] There the marines marched through the upper gate of the Armory and at 11:00 P.M. Lee gave the order for the citizen militia to move out of the Armory yard, giving control to the marines.[60]

Lee made preparations to attack the engine house at daylight. "But for the fear of sacrificing the lives of some of the gentlemen held by them as prisoners in a midnight assault, I should have ordered the attack at once."[61]

At the Wager House, unofficial headquarters of the defenders of Harpers Ferry, a never-ending, sporadic, activity ensued. Reporters, arriving on the train with the marines, interviewed all witnesses to the day's action. Stevens, badly wounded, but with "composure" answered their queries "in a small room, filled with excited armed men who more than once threatened to shoot him where he lay groaning with pain."[62]

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57 Because of danger to hostages, the howitzers could not be used.

58 Green, Israel, "The Capture of John Brown," North American Review, Dec., 1885.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Mason Report, 41.

62 New York Herald, 19 October 1859.

The militia squabbled, hunted down fugitive slaves, the more befuddled ones even proclaiming themselves to be members of the raiding party.[63] Governor Wise arrived and established quarters in the Wager House, addressing the citizenry and militia concerning the abolitionist-provoked raid on the town.[64]

For the hostages, and for the remnant of Brown's party in the engine house, the night was long, cold, dark. "Everything grew still, except that the citizens outside shouted and whooped all night long."[65] A surgeon was brought in to look at the wounds of Watson Brown, promising to return in the morning.[66] During the night Oliver Brown died as his brother Watson, lingered on.

Of the nineteen men who had marched across the bridge twenty-four hours before, there were now in the engine house, able to hold a musket, only five. John Brown, Shields Green, Edwin Coppoc, J. G. Anderson and Dauphin Thompson. From Captain Sinn, who had accompanied the surgeon into the fort, they had learned of the arrival of United States forces.(?) Still, the old Kansas veteran, enduring the second consecutive night without sleep, called to his four companions again and again during the night "Man, are you awake?"[67]

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63 Rosengarten, loc cit.

64 Ibid.

65 Statement of John Thomas Allstadt to K. Mayo.

66 Life, Trial and Execution, 40.

67 Villard, 449.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTURE OF BROWN, 18 OCTOBER 1859

During the night, Col. Lee drew up a surrender demand, in hopes that the invaders might be persuaded to surrender peaceably, thus avoiding the possibility of injuring their hostages.[1] Lee gave the paper to Stuart at 2:30 A.M., ordering him to deliver it under a white flag at the door of the engine house when so directed. Lee's plan was to have the marines close by the engine house in position to storm it, the militia drawn up around the Armory so that Brown would see the impossibility of further resistance.[2]

Stuart was ordered not to entertain any counter-proposals. For fear that the raiders might attempt to do harm to their prisoners when their counter-proposal was rejected, Lee ordered Stuart to give the signal immediately upon finding that the insurgents would not surrender. On that signal the marines would instantly batter down the door and assault with the bayonet. No shots were to be fired for fear of hitting the prisoners.[3]

Believing that the insurrection was chiefly aimed against state authority, rather than against the government Armory, Lee felt that perhaps the militia might wish the honor of capturing the invaders. About 6:30 A.M. he asked Col. Shriver of the Maryland volunteers if he desired this honor.

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1 R. E. Lee, I, 396.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 386-7.

Col. Shriver, it seems, did not care for glory at such a price. "These men of mine have wives and children at home. I will not expose them to such risks. You are paid for doing this kind of work."[4] Col. Baylor of the Virginia militia responded in a like manner, and Lee then gave Lt. Green his final orders. This failure of the several hundred militiamen to capture Brown's small band during the 17th or to volunteer for the honor on the morning of the 18th inspired varied and taunting comments from Northern newspapers. Gov. Wise somewhat crestfallen by the cautiousness of his men, declared that they "manifested good courage and did some service; but they were restrained by a natural tenderness for their neighbors and friends who were held prisoners and hostages, and supposed to be in imminent danger from any attempt to storm their captors."[5]

It was not until 7:00 A.M. that arrangements for the assault had been completed and there was light sufficient for operations.[6] The militia were formed outside the Armory walls to clear the streets of spectators and to prevent indiscriminate firing which might injure the marines.[7]

4 R. E. Lee, I, 398.

5 Gov. Wise's message to Va. Assembly.

6 R. E. Lee, I, 398.

7 Appendix to Gov. Wise's message to Assembly, 65.

The marines marched up to the western end of the engine house, taking position behind the northwest angle of the building, out of the line of fire from the door, which was now closed.[8] They were dressed in bright blue uniforms, with blue trousers, dark blue coats, white belts and French fatigue caps.[9]

Col. Lee, in civilian dress, took position outside the Armory gate, about thirty paces from the engine house door, protected by one of the large brick pillars of the Armory gate.[10] The whole population of the town and most of the countryside had gathered to witness the assault. With hundreds of militia and citizens watching in silence, Lt. Stuart, accompanied by a citizen, Samuel Strider who carried a flag of truce, advanced to the door of the engine house, calling to Mr. Smith that he had a communication from Col. Lee.[11]

8 Boteler, "John Brown Raid," Century, 1883.

9 Green, loc. cit.

10 Boteler, loc. cit.

11 Italics Stuart's. McClelland, 29. Stuart had met Brown in Kansas and declared that he identified "Mr. Smith" as 'Osawatomie' Brown at this time, supposedly the first identification of Brown during the raid. For the interesting question of when Brown was first identified, see Appendix.

Brown opened the door[12] a few inches and placed his body against the crack, holding a cocked carbine in one hand.[13] Stuart read to him the terms offered by Lee:

> Colonel Lee, United States Army, commanding troops sent by the President of the United States to suppress the insurrection at this place, demands the surrender of the persons in the Armory buildings. If they will peaceably surrender themselves and restore the pillaged property, they shall be kept in safety to await the orders of the President. Colonel Lee represents to them, in all frankness, that it is impossible for them to escape; that the Armory is surrounded on all sides by troops; and that if he is compelled to take them by force he cannot answer for their safety.[14]

According to Stuart the parley "was a long one," Brown presenting his proposition in every possible way and with admirable tact, but refusing to surrender, asking that he, his men and his prisoners be permitted to cross the river unmolested.[15] During the conference several of the prisoners begged Stuart to ask Col. Lee to come and talk with Brown personally but Stuart told them that Lee had no other terms but those that had been offered.[16] However one voice called out "Never mind us, fire!"

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12 Facing the engine house there were three doors. To the right was the entrance to the watch, the center door was the one used by the raiders to fire through, the one Brown talked to Stuart through, and the one the Marines stormed.

13 Ibid.

14 Mason Report, 43-4.

15 McClelland, 29.

16 Ibid.

It was Col. Washington, and his voice was heard by Col. Lee who knew him to be a prisoner and, being personally acquainted with Washington, remarked in admiration, "The old revolutionary blood does tell."[17]

Finally Stuart stepped back from the door and waved his hat, the signal he and Green had previously agreed upon.[18] The Marines had awaited the outcome of the parley beside the watch house wall. Green had chosen twelve as his storming party and these men now sprang to the entrance, three armed with sledge hammers attempting to smash in the door. Little progress was made with the hammers, as the doors were tied on the inside with ropes and braced by the fire engines.[19] Seeing a ladder lying nearby, Green gave orders to use it as a battering ram, the reserve detachment of twelve men to employ as a supporting column for the assault group.[20]

A "tremendous assault" was made using the ladder as a battering ram and on the second blow of the ladder-end an entrance was effected "a ragged hole low down in the right-hand door,[21] the door being splintered and cracked some distance upward."[22]

Lt. Green had been standing in front of the abutement between the two doors to the engine house. He now stopped down and forced his way

17 R. E. Lee, I, 399.

18 Green, loc. cit.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 That is, the right-hand door of the two doors into the engine house. The extreme right door would be the door into the watch room.

22 Ibid. This account of Lt. Green is the most complete account of the storming of the engine house. When other citations are not given, the description is from Green.

through the opening, the first man to enter. Behind him came Major W. W. Russell.[23] The third man to force his way through the narrow aperture was Pvt. Luke Quinn who was killed by a rifle shot at the opening.[24] The fourth was Pvt. Rupert who sustained a flesh wound of the face, losing several teeth.[25] The remainder of the party entered without injury.

In the engine house the prisoners were crowded back in the east (to the left as you enter) corner of the engine house,[26] Washington apparently towards the front. According to Green there were two pieces of fire fighting equipment blocking the doors. He came around behind the right engine and saw Col. Washington, whom he knew. As to the events which followed, Green's account is as reliable as any we have.

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23 Maj. Russel had been requested by the Secretary of the Navy to accompany the expedition but, being a paymaster, he was not permitted to command troops. He had volunteered to accompany the storming party. Stuart also had no command, because of his status as an army officer. To have placed him in command because of the marine troops would have been an outrage "which would have rung through the Navy for twenty years." McClelland, Stuart, 29.

24 Quinn's grave is in the Catholic cemetery on Bolivar Heights.

25 Bushong, 121.

26 Statement of J. H. Allstadt to K. Mayo.

"Hello, Green," said Washington calmly, reaching out his hand. Green grasped it with his left, holding fast to his saber in his right as Washington pointed out Brown who was kneeling with a levelled carbine. Green instantly brought his saber down upon Brown's head with all his strength.[27] Brown was moving as the blow fell and Green had slightly miscalculated the distance, the result was a cut high on the back of Brown's neck, knocking him helpless to the floor. "Justinatively" as Brown fell, Green gave him a thrust with the saber, but it struck part of Brown's accoutrements and did not penetrate, the sword bending double.[28] Taking the badly bent weapon in both hands Green rained blows upon Brown's head.[29]

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27 The identity of the man who killed Pvt. Quinn is not known. Green declared that Brown had just fired and must have been the one who killed Quinn.

28 This sword thrust must be listed among the dramatic scenes of the raid. In Green's haste to leave Washington he had brought his light dress sword instead of his heavy service saber. Had he been armed with the latter, the wounds he inflicted upon Brown might very well have been fatal and without the ensuing trial much of the excitement incited by his defense at the trial and his death on the gallows, would have been eliminated. Many hold to the tale that the sword thrust was stopped by the sword of Frederick the Great which Brown was supposed to have been wearing.

29 Villard, 453. Green's savage attack on Brown is partly explained by his sectional sympathy. Born in New York he had married a Virginia girl and was Southern in his sympathies, later serving in the Confederate Army. Talking with Green during his trip to Charles Town to witness the execution, Edward Ruffin declared himself "gratified to find /Green/ entirely with me." From Diary of Edward Ruffin, entry of December 4th, 1859, printed in Jefferson County Republican, 20 September 1951.

The Marines had been ordered to use only the bayonet, this they now did, as they "rushed in like tigers," bayoneting one man seeking protection behind an engine and pinning another to the rear wall--Dauphin Thompson and Jeremiah Anderson--both instantly killed. Smoke from the discharge of the raiders' guns filled the engine room so that only "with difficulty" could one see across the room, which might account for the varied descriptions of the action. Three minutes after Stuart's signal to Green the fight was over.

Very evidently some of Brown's men must have fired, as two marines were hit. As to the amount of resistance after the entrance of the main body, at least one man yelled "surrender" and young Allstadt declared that Coppoc "and the rest" threw down their guns. Most of the prisoners agreed that Shields Green, although belligerent during previous hostilities, attempted to pass himself off as a slave after the marines took over, but was pointed out as one of the raiders by Col. Washington.

The eleven hostages, none of whom were injured during the vestivities, were the "sorriest lot of people I ever saw," Green declared. Captives for twenty-four hours or more, in constant dread of being killed, maimed, or worse, they were found huddled in the corner where lay the bodies of Oliver Brown and Stewart Taylor.

Of Brown's twenty-two man Provisional Army, fifteen were dead, wounded, or prisoners. Four were taken out of the engine house alive;Watson Brown, who died the next day, and John Brown,badly cut from Green's sword-play,[30] were laid on the grass in front of the fort. Shields Green and Edwin Coppoc were taken unwounded. Beside the wounded in front of the engine

30 R. E. Lee, I, 400.

house lay the bodies of four invaders--Oliver Brown and Stewart Taylor, killed in the doorway on the 17th and Jeremiah Anderson and Dauphin Thompson, bayoneted a few minutes before.

In and about the town lay five more dead, Daingerfield Newby, killed along Shenandoah Street outside the Armory gate; William Leeman and William Thompson lying riddled in the shallows of the Potomac, John Kagi and Lewis Leary similarly in the Shenandoah. Two of the band had already been taken prisoner, Aaron Stevens, badly wounded while carrying a flag of truce, and John Copeland, captured in the foray at Hall's Rifle Works.

The other seven members of the Army were hastening toward haven in the North--Owen Brown, Francis Meriam, Osborn Anderson, Barclay Coppoc, Albert Hazlett, Charles Tidd and John Cook.[31]

As Brown lay on the grass in front of the engine house, slowly recovering consciousness,[32] so great was the curiosity of the throngs of militia, townspeople, and nearby residents to see the wounded leader of the invasion, the marines had difficulty keeping the crowd back. While newspapers carried accounts that it was only the efforts of these marines which saved the prisoners from immediate lynching,[33] Lee's biographer declares that there was no show of violence, Col. Lee's authority being fully respected.[34]

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31 Five made good their escape, Albert Hazlett and John Cook were caught, returned to Virginia and executed.

32 Green.

33 New York Tribune, 19 October 1859, Life, Trial and Execution, 35.

34 R. E. Lee, I, 400.

Of Brown's appearance, during the raid and as he lay before his "fort," we have no clear picture. Probably his captor, Green, gave the most reliable[35]---Brown wore only trousers and shirt at the time of his capture, and no hat;[36] his trousers were tucked into boots. Green remembered his clothes as being gray. His face and beard were covered with blood from the sword cut, making him look like a "savage."[37] In order to ease his pain and get him away from the crowds which pressed about, trying to get a look at the legendary "Osawatomie" Brown, Lee had the wounded man carried into the paymaster's office, the building next to the engine house.

All of the interest of the spectators to the final act of the raid was not bestowed entirely upon Brown or his confederates. Friends and relatives of the released hostages greeted them with understandable relief and joy, crowding about the weary, dirty, survivors of an unpleasant experience, as the rest of the throngs fought to get a closer look at the raiders.

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35 Green, Israel. N.Am.Review (?)

36 According to Villard, 426, he began raid wearing his "old, battle-worn Kansas cap..."

37 Boteler, "John Brown Raid," Century, 1883.

And amidst this noisy confusion one of the hostages made an exit from the engine house which rivaled that of John Brown himself.[38]

Col. Washington had continued to distinguish himself during the fighting in the engine house as he had previously by displaying dignity and fortitude under rather trying circumstances. Lt. Green later declared that Washington had kept to the front during the fight in the engine house while the rest of the prisoners huddled in the corner and that when he (Green) met Washington immediately upon forcing his way into the engine house "he was as cool as he would have been on his own veranda entertaining guests."[39]

But when the rest of the prisoners were freed by the marines, no doubt leaving the engine house with commendable speed, considering the age of some, Col. Washington remained by himself within the engine house. Col. Washington had been a prisoner now for some thirty-one hours, during which time he had of course no opportunity to attend to his toilet or to freshen his linen. For this patrician and bearer of one of the noble names of Virginia, to appear publicly with soiled hands was unthinkable, regardless of his remoteness from the niceties of society for such an unexpectedly long time. So in the engine house George Washington's great grand-nephew waited until a pair of gloves had been procured for him. Then, pulling on the gloves, he sauntered unconcernedly away from the engine house toward the Wager House and was met by appreciative friends,

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38 The writer must admit bias and an obvious departure from the historical method in declaring the following incident to be his favorite of the many fabulous occurrences of this incredible chapter written by John Brown in American history.

39 Green, loc. cit.

one of whom, evidently to Washington's satisfaction, asked if he might not wish to "take something." The gracious Colonel smilingly replied "Thank you, I will. It seems a month since I've had one."[40]

One final episode of the Harpers Ferry drama was enacted that afternoon in the paymaster's office, of which Brown's biographer declared "There have been few more dramatic scenes in American history; few upon which the shadows of coming events were more ominously cast."[41] The two wounded prisoners, Brown and Stevens, lay upon "miserable shakedowns, covered with some old bedding." Around them stood a group of inquisitors, many of whom were to assume decisive roles in the approaching sectional conflict: Robert E. Lee, Jeb Stuart, Congressman Wallandigham of Ohio, Governor Wise of Virginia, Senator Mason of Virginia, Colonel Washington, Andrew Hunter and Congressman Charles J. Faulkner of Virginia. During the long interview other interested spectators apparently wandered in and out of the room.

Before beginning the investigation, the courtley Lee asked Brown whether these men caused Brown any uncomfortableness, if so, they would be asked to leave. Brown declined to have the men excluded, declaring that he would be happy "to make himself and his motives clearly understood."[42]

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40 Douglas, I Rode with Stonewall.

41 Villard, 456.

42 Ibid.

His wounds, at first thought to be severe, had proved to be rather superficial cuts. A witness to the scene described Brown as rather small-sized and lean, but wiry and active, with restless gray eyes, and grizzly beard and hair. With his hair matted and tangled, and his hands and clothes smeared with blood, the old Kansas fighter presented a bizarre appearance.[43]

The men questioning Brown were chiefly interested in learning who in the North had been responsible for backing Brown and providing him with money and equipment. This Brown refused to divulge, declaring he could not implicate his friends. There was also anxiety as to how many men Brown commanded, and whether a large number might still be at large. Brown told them the number he had brought into Virginia--eighteen and himself.[44]

As to the justification for his deed Brown declared "I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them; that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you and as precious in the sight of God." As to the purpose which inspired him and the men who joined his army:

43 New York Herald, 21 October 1859. A reporter for the Herald had arrived about two o'clock, shortly after the questioning began, and took down the remainder of the long session. It is printed in the edition of 21 October 1859. It also appears in large part in Villard, 457-63.

44 The other three had been left as rearguard at Kennedy Farm.

> I respect the rights of the poorest and weakest of colored people, oppressed by the slave system, just as much as I do those of the most wealthy and powerful. That is the idea that has moved me and that alone. We expect no reward, except the satisfaction of endeavoring to do for those in distress and greatly oppressed, as we would be done by. The cry of distress of the oppressed is my reason, and the only thing that prompted me to come here.

When asked by the reporter if he wished to make any further statement, at the close of the interview, Brown replied with a prophecy.

> I have nothing to say, only that I claim to be here in carrying out a measure I believe perfectly justifiable, and not to act the part of an incendary or ruffian, but to aid those suffering great wrong. I wish to say, furthermore, that you had better--all you people at the South--prepare yourselves for a settlement of that question that must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. The sooner you are prepared the better. You may dispose of me very easily; I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled--this negro question I mean--the end of that is not yet.

Col. Lee had sent Lt. Stuart and a party of marines to Kennedy Farm shortly after the capture, and had dispatched Maryland militia troops to search for remaining members of Brown's band and the arms said to be deposited in the schoolhouse.[45] Stuart found the miscellaneous supplies of the Provisional Army at Kennedy Farm -- blankets, clothing, utensils, pikes -- and transported a wagon load back to the Ferry.[46] However a good portion of the supplies had been turned over by souvenir hunters. But the most previous find for the angry citizens of Virginia was the entire record of John Brown's correspondence preceding the raid--the letters

45 Mason Report, 42.

which disclosed the part played by many of Brown's New England backers in supporting the raid. Hugh Forbes, former lieutenant to Brown lamented shortly after the raid

> When I transmitted to Capt. Brown copies of all my correspondence with his friends, I never dreamed that the most terrible engine of destruction which he would carry with him in his campaign would be a carpet-bag loaded with 400 letters, to be turned against his friends, of whom the journals assert that more than forty-seven are already compromised.[47]

The majority of Brown's supply of pikes were found at Kennedy Farm by Stuart and most of these were promptly distributed as souvenirs of the raid.[48]

The disposition of the prisoners and the problem of whether state or Federal government would try the case were questions that caused temporary difficulty. Pending solution, Secretary of War Floyd instructed Lt. Col. Lee to place the prisoners in joint custody of the United States marshal and the sheriff of Jefferson County, Va., and preparations were made to transfer the prisoners from Harpers Ferry to Charles Town the next day.[49]

On the night of Brown's capture the first of a long series of false alarms of further raids was reported, the beginning of an era of uncertainty, fear, and anger for the inhabitants of the town and

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47 Letter to the New York Herald, 27 October 1859, cited in Villard, 467 n.

48 "John Brown pikes" became such a popular item of sale that for months "genuine" pikes were being sold to travelers at Harpers Ferry, finally forceing the B&O railroad to forbid hawkers from peddling on the railroad tracks. Document Y, 43-4.

49 Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 401.

surrounding county which resulted in armed citizens patrolling the streets of Harpers Ferry every night from the capture of Brown until his execution on December 2nd.[50]

About nine o'clock on the evening of the 19th Lee received a report from a resident of the small town of Pleasant Valley, Md., five miles north of Harpers Ferry, that a party of men had attacked the town at sunset and "from the cries of the women and children, he believed the residents of the valley were being massacred."[51] The immediate hysteria of the townspeople was intensified by the arrival of families from Sandy Hook, fleeing for their lives. A detachment of marines, arriving at Pleasant Valley found everything peaceful.[52]

Typical of the confusion and excitement in the town on the night of Brown's capture was the scene described by J. C. Rosengarten, a director of the Pennsylvania Railroad whose unfortunate experience in being jailed as a suspect has already been noted, an incident which probably made him somewhat uncharitable in his writing.[53]

The night was "made hideous by the drunken noise and turmoil of the crowd in the village." The "tipsy and pot-valient militia" swerving somewhat from their guard duties and perhaps somewhat disappointed with their showing during the raid "fought and squabbled with each other, and

50 Barry, 77-8.

51 Mason Report, 43.

52 Ibid.

53 Rosengarten, loc. cit.

only ceased that sport to pursue and hunt down some fugitive negroes and one or two half-maddened drunken fellows who, in their frenzy proclaimed themselves John Brown's men."

In the Water House Governor Wise had taken refuge after "haranguing" the crowd from the hotel porch. Seated at the table with his staff, "with tallow candles guttering in the darkness," and with militiamen of the Richmond Grays resting against their knapsacks in the edges of the yellow light, arms stacked in the corners, Governor Wise went through the papers of John Brown, taken by Stuart at Kennedy Farm, his running comments damning the Northern instigators of the plot. For Rosengarten, the real content of letters and newspaper clippings "were distorted and twisted by the reading."

The next morning the prisoners were taken to Charles Town, county seat of Jefferson County, Lt. Col. Lee made a final check of Brown and his three fellow-raiders. Because of the possibility of the irate citizenry seizing the prisoners, they were guarded by a detachment of Marines under Lt. Green.[54] Because of their wounds, Brown and Stevens were transported to the station by wagon, Green and Coppoc, marching alongside, the marines forming a hollow square about them.[55] At the station the angry spectators, numbering several hundred, swarmed around the train that would carry the prisoners away with cries of "Lynch them! Lynch them! Governor Wise called for fair play, the crowd subsided and the men were placed upon the train for Charles Town.[56]

54 Freeman, R. E. Lee, I, 401.

55 Hunter, "John Brown Raid," loc. cit. Villard, 470.

56 Villard, 470.

SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE BROWN RAID

The writer had originally intended to include in the Appendix a number of topics which deserved more than footnote explanation but were too lengthy to be included in the text without interfering with the flow of the narrative. It is regretted that time was not available to handle these interesting questions.

A study of John Brown's life and character might have thrown light on his anti-slavery activity. Like many men who have played major roles in shaping events of history Brown during the greater part of his life was unknown and unsuccessful. Throughout the first fifty-five years of his life he was dogged by poverty and failure. In thirty-five adult years he was associated with more than twenty business enterprises, most of which came to disastrous ends, some in bankruptcy and "several of the cases in question leave no doubt of flagrant dishonesty on his part in both business and family relations," Professor Malin observes. During this period Brown's family was often in want, in two marriages he fathered twenty children.

Brown's contribution to the Kansas warfare resulted in the so-called "Legend of Fifty-Six" in which John Brown emerged as the Hero and director of successful anti-slavery guerilla activity. Malin's careful examination of this legend convinces him that "John Brown did not appear to have had much influence either in making or marring Kansas history."

One can neither pass over him nor explain away Brown's part in the massacre of May 24, 1856 along the Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas, where he and a small party (including four of his sons) hacked to death five men with broadswords. Two of the victims were foreign born and were not connected with the South's interest, none of the five owned slaves. The murders, Brown declared, had been "decreed by Almighty God, ordained from Eternity."

Of enlightening value to an understanding of the era preceding the Civil War is the list of those who supported Brown in his attacks on slavery, a list which would seem to refute those who dismiss John Brown as a madman. The "Secret Six" who supported him with supplies and money were men of prestige and character--surgeon, philosopher, philanthropist, capitalist, professor, minister. To Theodore Parker, the minister, who had a Harvard Divinity School Degree, command of twenty languages, a library of 16,000 volumes, and was one of the most learned men of his time as well as one of the outstanding preachers, Brown on the gallows was a "Saint." The intellectuals of New England--Emerson, Thoreau, Channing, Bronson, Alcott, Longfellow, Bryand, Lowell, Beecher, believed that Brown's martyrdom" at Charles Town would "make the gallows as glorious as the cross."

Was Brown insane? In seeking the answer to this enigma, we are no closer to certainty than in other puzzling sides of Brown's personality.

His mother, and his maternal grandmother died insane. Three sisters and two brothers of his mother were considered intermittently insane. Brown's sister and her daughter, and one of his brothers were likewise intermittently afflicted. Among six first cousins, all of whom had their mad moments, two were often deranged, two were frequent guests of an asylum, and two were inmates at the time of Brown's trial. Brown refused to permit a plea of insanity to be entered at his trial and one doubts that he would have secured such warm and constant support through several years from his New England backers, had they entertained any suspicion that the man in whose hands they placed their funds as well as their legal and social security was of unstable mentality. Was Brown insane?

Probably the most significant feature of John Brown's life was not anything concerned with what he actually was or did, but what people of the time thought that he was or did. The hysteria engendered by his H Harpers Ferry raid seemed to cleave the Republic irrevocably--yet was Brown's stroke cause or effect?

For the purposes of the National Monument at Harpers Ferry, a study of the impact of Brown's raid upon a nation already seething with hate and fear might be more valuable than a study of what he did at Harpers Ferry for no other event of that era of turmoil better typifies the degree of sectional controversy, or catches the whole sweep of the nation moving unchecked toward disaster.

Brown's singular position in American history and the inception of the Brown legend is perhaps best stated by Malin.

> The kind of man John Brown was, matters little. There were few who knew much in particular about him, or who cared sufficiently to know, to make the effort necessary to find out. They wished to see him hanged, and feared that he would not be. They were absorbed only in the coming of the Martyr--their Martyr. As men create God in their own image, so also do they evoke Heroes and Martyrs. Indeed, Thoreau spoke more prophetically than he knew: 'He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light.' Each created a John Brown to suit the occasion and therefore the characteristics of this image depended upon the cause to which the creator was pledged. The South made of him a Villain, a Devil, and demanded that, in fulfillment of their idea of a moral world, he should be destroyed, and any defender was summarily silenced. In the North, he was dramatized in the role of Liberator, as they thought he ought to appear, to illustrate their ideal of how right and freedom should triumph in their moral world. John Brown seemed to appear in answer to their wish, and they substituted his name, a homely, almost universal name, to their idealization. It is clear from their expressions, repeated again and again, that they had no interest in the man, the human being,--he interested them only as the fulfillment of their imaginary drama.

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Bibliographical Note on John Brown

Because John Brown is such an extremely controversial figure in a most controversial epoch of American history, accounts of his life and activities are not likely to be free from warmth. He is still an enigmatic personage wrapped in obscurity and myth.

Fourteen full-sized biographies of Brown have appeared; none has been written by a professional historian; none could seriously claim to be a work of objectivity. To his biographers, as to his contemporaries, Brown was either the Great Hero or the Great Villain of the drama.

The starting point for a study of John Brown is Villard's biography, obviously a sympathetic portrayal; but covering every phase of Brown's life through a study of all known sources. However Villard' s research assistant, Katherine Mayo, did most of the handling of the source materials and interviewing of persons who had known Brown and his friends. Perhaps too much reliance was placed upon reminiscences of members of Brown's family concerning events of fifty and more years before.

The unpublished documents relating to Brown and the Harpers Ferry raid are widely scattered. The great store of letters which Brown left at Kennedy Farm and which did so much to inflame the South because of the support Brown's scheme had received from Northern Abolitionists were taken to Richmond, but many were lost and stolen at

Harpers Ferry where they were publicly read and condemned. This collection is now in the Virginia State Library in Richmond, and in the John Brown collection in the Library of Congress--the latter containing the affidavits produced for use at the trial to prove Brown's insanity.

Large collections of Brown papers are also in the Boston Public Library and in the Massachusetts Historical Society. A smaller collection, dealing principally with communications between Brown and his followers at Harpers Ferry and their families is in the Dreer Collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia. The largest collection of materials of all kinds dealing with John Brown is in the possession of Boyd B. Stutler of New York, probably the outstanding authority on Brown today. Mr. Stutler's biography of John Brown is scheduled to be published in the near future.

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