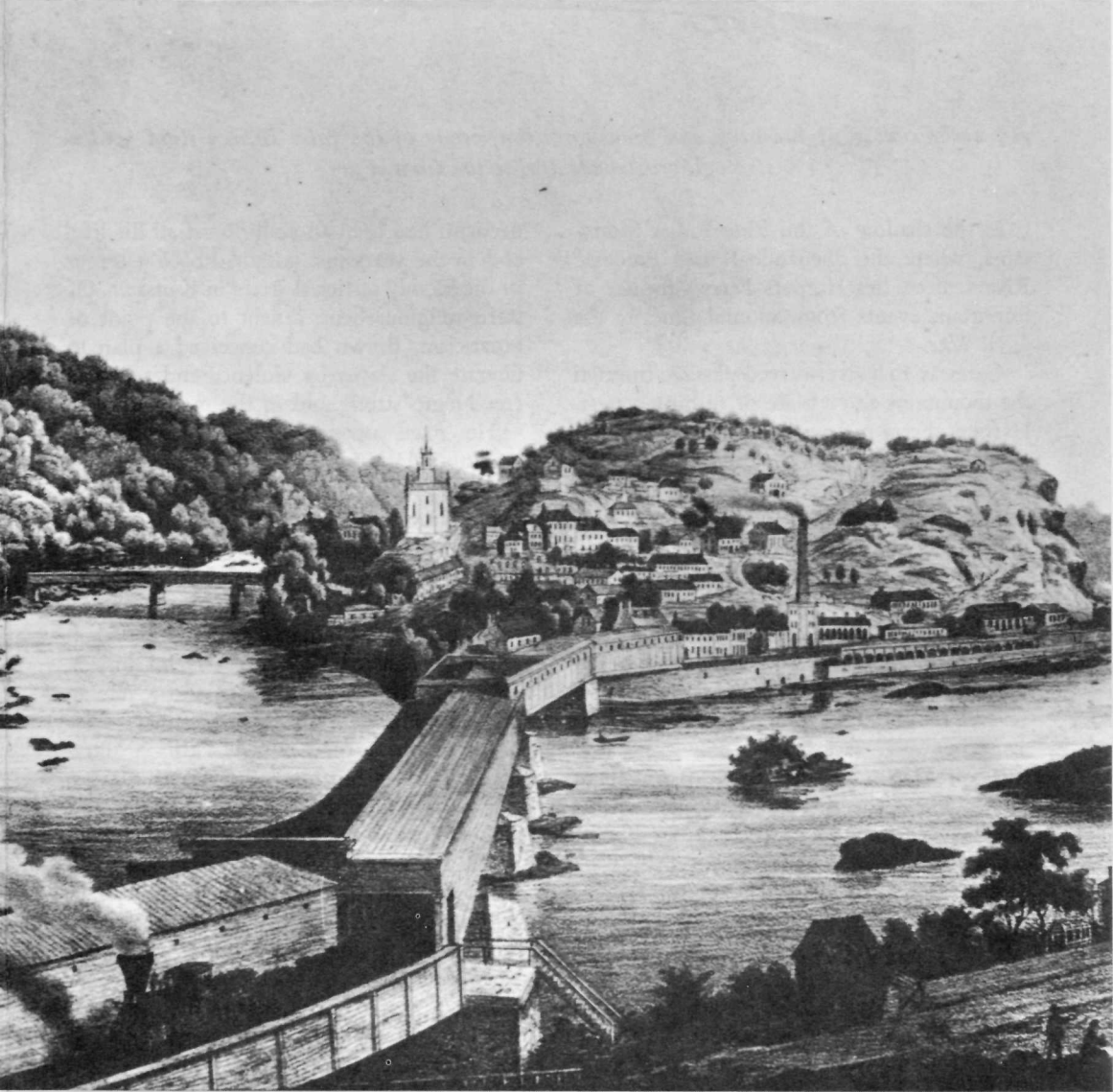


HARPERS FERRY

NATIONAL MONUMENT

WEST VIRGINIA



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An early center of industry and transportation, scene of the John Brown Raid, and a strategic crossroads during the Civil War.

In the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers meet, lies Harpers Ferry—theater of important events from colonial times to the Civil War.

Gateway to a river-carved passage through the mountains and a place of rushing waters, Harpers Ferry witnessed exciting developments in early America's transportation and industrial evolution. Then, in 1859, John Brown—who conceived himself an instrument of Providence—erupted from Maryland in the violent raid that goaded the Nation ever closer to civil war. When sectional passions exploded into conflict, this juncture of mountain and valley became an important military objective, changing hands several times. Its capture by Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson in 1862 was a dramatic prelude to the great Battle of Antietam, which ended the first Confederate invasion of the North. And when peace finally came again, Harpers Ferry lay prostrate—a burned and battered casualty of war.

John Brown's Raid

No more placid town could have been found when suddenly, in October 1859, John Brown's Raid focused the Nation's attention on Harpers Ferry. Brown, a native of Con-

necticut, had been an abolitionist all his life, and in the years just past had been a leader in the bloody sectional strife in Kansas. Of stern religious bent, ardent to the point of fanaticism, Brown had conceived a plan to liberate the slaves by violence and set up a free-Negro stronghold in the mountains.

He fixed upon Harpers Ferry as the starting-point for the insurrection, apparently because it was near the Mason-Dixon line and the surrounding mountains were suitable for guerilla warfare. Further, capture of the thousands of arms stored in the arsenal of the U.S. Armory at the Ferry could equip a formidable army.

Brown reached Harpers Ferry on July 3, 1859. With two of his sons and a veteran of "Bleeding Kansas," he established a base of operations at the Kennedy Farm in Maryland, 5 miles north of the town. There, during the summer, he recruited men and gathered guns and supplies.

On a Sunday night, October 16, Brown set forth with 18 men and a wagonload of supplies for Harpers Ferry. Three more men stayed behind to guard the Kennedy Farm.

At 10:30 p.m., after cutting the telegraph wires, Brown's party seized the watchman at the Maryland side of the Potomac River bridge. With darkness their ally, the som-

ber little army slipped into Harpers Ferry and captured the armory watchmen in the town. Brown then dispatched a party to bring in slaves and hostages.

An eastbound train arrived at the river after midnight, but the train conductor, warned of the trouble, refused to cross the bridge until after daylight. Brown, for some unexplained reason, permitted the train to proceed. The conductor, upon arriving at Monocacy, Md., at 7 a.m., telegraphed the alarm.

Back at Harpers Ferry, shooting broke out between Brown's men and local residents. Militia arrived from Charles Town, 8 miles away, and by noon secured the Potomac bridge to Maryland. Aroused townspeople guarded the Shenandoah bridge.

Ironically, a free Negro, Heyward Shepherd, baggagemaster at the train depot, was the first person killed. During the day several more people were killed and wounded on both sides.

At nightfall of the 17th, the surviving raiders and their hostages lay besieged in the fire enginehouse of the armory. Only five of Brown's men remained unwounded.

"The Storming of the Engine House." From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, October 29, 1859.



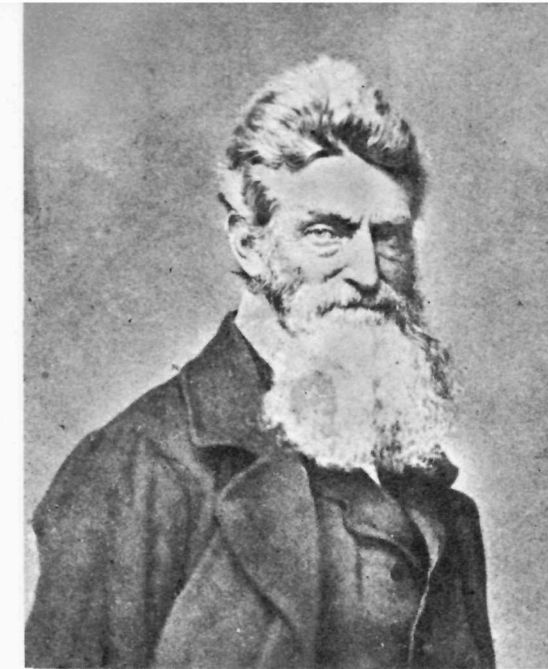
Two of his sons, Oliver and Watson, were badly hit; one died during the night, the other later.

That night, Col. Robert E. Lee and Lt. J. E. B. Stuart with 90 U.S. Marines arrived from Washington. The next morning, Tuesday, October 18, the marines stormed the enginehouse. Using a heavy ladder to batter in the door of the building, they thrust their way inside, bayoneting two men and capturing the others. John Brown, himself, was severely cut about the head in the affray.

Of Brown's party, 10 were killed, 7 captured, and 5 escaped; on the other side, 4 civilians and 1 marine were dead.

Brown's Fate Divides the Nation

Amid great popular excitement, John Brown was brought to trial in Charles Town a week after the raid. He was indicted for treason against Virginia, for murder, and for conspiring with slaves to rebel and make insurrection. Brown refused to permit a plea of insanity and was convicted. On November 2, he was sentenced to die.



John Brown. Courtesy, Library of Congress.

In an eloquent statement he denied everything "but . . . a design on my part to free slaves." He felt no guilt. To interfere on behalf of God's "despised poor" was "no wrong, but right."

Brown was hanged at Charles Town on December 2. Maj. Thomas J. Jackson—another whose name would be forever linked with Harpers Ferry—was present on that grim day. His troop of 21 Virginia Military Institute cadets were in the guard posted directly in front of the gallows.

Those of Brown's comrades-in-arms who were captured were also tried, convicted, and hanged.

In John Brown hanged, the Northern abolitionists had a martyr; in John Brown's Raid, the South saw an evil omen. Popular passion aroused by the event, North and South, made it increasingly difficult for moderates to find a common ground on which both sections could agree and so maintain the Union. Before many months passed, men under arms would be marching to the tune of "John Brown's Body," and the once peaceful little town of Harpers

Ferry would find itself an unhappy pawn in a long and tragic civil war.

Harper's Ferry in the Civil War

At the outset of the war in April 1861, Virginia militia advanced on the town, eager to obtain the arms and machinery in the U.S. Armory. The handful of United States soldiers assigned to guard the Government property could not defend Harpers Ferry. But before they fled across the Potomac they managed to fire the arsenal, destroying a stand of 15,000 muskets and rifles stored there. The Confederates salvaged all the machinery possible and shipped it South—an important boost for the Confederacy's war effort. They then completed the destruction of the rifle and musket factories.

In this early period of the war, Thomas J. Jackson, now a colonel, returned to Harpers Ferry to command a Confederate force for several weeks. On May 23, he seized 56 locomotives and more than 300 cars on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Most of this equipment was taken to Martinsburg, only to be burned and destroyed the next month. Later, multihorse teams hauled 14 of the locomotives over the Valley Pike to Strasburg where they entered service in the South's straining railroad system.

The firebrands of war continued to sear once-peaceful Harpers Ferry. After Union troops removed a large supply of wheat from the flour mill on Virginus Island in autumn 1861, Confederate soldiers, dressed as civilians, crept into town under cover of darkness and burned the mill.

A few months later a sniper, firing from a building in the town, killed a Union scout. In retaliation, Union troops burned the entire "point" section of the waterfront.

The town was again caught between opposing armies in spring 1862 when "Stonewall" Jackson, as a climax to his brilliant Valley Campaign, threatened a northern invasion.

The Maryland Campaign. Immediately after the Battle of Second Manassas, Gen. Robert E. Lee led his victorious army across

the Potomac into Maryland. Thus, in September 1862, began the first Confederate invasion of the North.

When he reached Frederick on his way toward Pennsylvania, Lee determined that he must secure his line of communications through the Shenandoah Valley by capturing the strong Union garrison at Harpers Ferry. To do this he evolved a daring plan: Part of the army would swing southwest and attack Harpers Ferry; the remainder would press on toward Hagerstown. Success depended on the Confederates' ability to capture Harpers Ferry and reunite quickly. Delay would give Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Union army near Washington the opportunity to strike Lee's fragmented army and destroy it.

The Confederates lagged behind Lee's timetable and a fateful blunder threatened his plan.

On September 12 and 13, advance units of the pursuing Union army marched into Frederick—evacuated only hours before by the last Confederates. One of the Union soldiers, Pvt. B. W. Mitchell, was poking around his new bivouac where Confederates under Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill had been

camped a few days previously. Mitchell discovered three cigars wrapped in a paper. The cigars were a good find. So was the paper. It was a stray copy of Lee's Special Order No. 191, and it gave every detail of the dangerous maneuver that had divided the Confederate army in the face of McClellan's rapidly advancing host.

Within the hour McClellan had the order. Immediately he saw the chance to destroy first one and then the other of the separated parts of Lee's army. McClellan's efforts to do this would lead to the Battle of Antietam at Sharpsburg, Md., on September 17.

Lee had sent three columns against Harpers Ferry: "Stonewall" Jackson approached Bolivar Heights from the west; Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws invested Maryland Heights from the north; and Brig. Gen. John G. Walker secured Loudoun Heights from the east. Thus, by September 13, Col. Dixon S. Miles, commanding the Harpers Ferry garrison, found himself surrounded by Confederates. Posted on dominating heights, they overlooked Union positions at Camp Hill and Bolivar Heights.

Miles and his men withstood Confederate artillery fire from the heights across the Po-

Harpers Ferry, near the end of the war. Ruined armory buildings on the left. Courtesy, Library of Congress.



tomac and Shenandoah Rivers for 2 days, almost preventing Lee from reconcentrating his army. Although Union casualties were not heavy, Miles surrendered his garrison on the 15th, not knowing that if he had held out a little longer a rescue force would have arrived. A cannon shot mortally wounded Miles at the very end of the action.

Approximately 12,700 men of the Harpers Ferry garrison were captured, the largest bag of Union prisoners during the war. Casualties included 44 killed and 173 wounded. Confederate casualties in the action were slightly higher, 39 killed and 247 wounded. A sidelight of the surrender was the desperate escape engineered by Col. B. P. Davis. Under cover of darkness, he led a Union cavalry force of 1,500 over a pontoon bridge across the Potomac and made his way through the Confederate army into Pennsylvania.

Immediately after Miles capitulated, Jackson hurried off toward Sharpsburg to reinforce Lee in the Battle of Antietam. Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill stayed behind to arrange the parole of the Union prisoners. Having quickly done that, Hill, in turn, rushed to Sharpsburg with his men and reached there at a critical moment in time to save Lee's army from threatened disaster.

The Gettysburg Campaign and After. When Lee invaded the North a second

time—in the 1863 campaign that led to Gettysburg—a Union garrison evacuated Harpers Ferry and the strong system of fortifications that had been built on Maryland Heights that year. The Confederates held Harpers Ferry briefly for the last time when Jubal A. Early raided Washington in the summer of 1864.

Yet once more, in late 1864 and early 1865, Harpers Ferry played an important military role. This time it served the Union as a base of operations for Philip Sheridan's devastating campaign through the Shenandoah Valley.

At the end of the war Harpers Ferry was a ghost town with mills, armory, arsenal, and many other buildings destroyed. It was never fully to recover.

Early History

Peter Stephens, a trader, was the first settler at the site of the future Harpers Ferry. The date was 1733. Fourteen years later a millwright named Robert Harper purchased "Peter's Hole," as the place was called, and established a ferry. He saw the possibilities of waterpower and built a mill. Around these enterprises grew a small village that later adopted Harper's name.

During the Presidency of George Washington, Congress authorized establishment

of a gun factory at Harpers Ferry. The President had often visited the place and thought it "... the most eligible spot on the river ..." for a Federal armory. Its location promised waterpower, supplies of iron, hardwood forests for making charcoal to fuel the forges, and a watercourse on which to ship finished products to the future national capital in the District of Columbia. The gun factory completed its first arms in 1801 and was turning out 10,000 muskets a year by 1810.

Nine years later, John Hall, a gunsmith and inventor from Maine, received a contract from the Federal Government to manufacture 1,000 unique, breech-loading flintlock rifles—Hall's own invention. These guns were made on so exact a scale that all the parts were interchangeable. This was the first completely successful application of the principle that led to modern mass production.

Two buildings on Virginus Island were assigned for Hall's use, and his rifle proved successful enough that the contract was repeatedly renewed and thousands were produced at Hall's Rifle Works in the ensuing years.

As one of the few water-level gateways through the Blue Ridge Mountains, Harpers Ferry gap early attracted the attention of transportation interests. The 1830's brought a spirited race between the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, being built from Washington, D.C., and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which started at Baltimore, Md. Their goal was Cumberland, Md., and after that the Ohio Valley. The canal reached Harpers Ferry in November 1833, more than a year ahead of its rival. But only the railroad pushed on to the Ohio Valley; the canal stopped at Cumberland.

Thomas Jefferson, an early visitor to the locality, extolled the beauty of Harpers Ferry in his *Notes on Virginia*. "The passage of the Potomac through the Blue Ridge," he wrote, "is perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature. . . . This scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic."

About Your Visit

The visitor center, where you can see exhibits and get information, is open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. in summer; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year.

A walking tour of downtown Harpers Ferry and the automobile route to Bolivar Heights and "John Brown's Farm" are shown on the map. A park trail leads from Jefferson Rock to Loudoun Heights, where it meets the Appalachian Trail. A self-guiding history-nature trail encircling Virginus Island is also available.

Administration

HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL MONUMENT is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

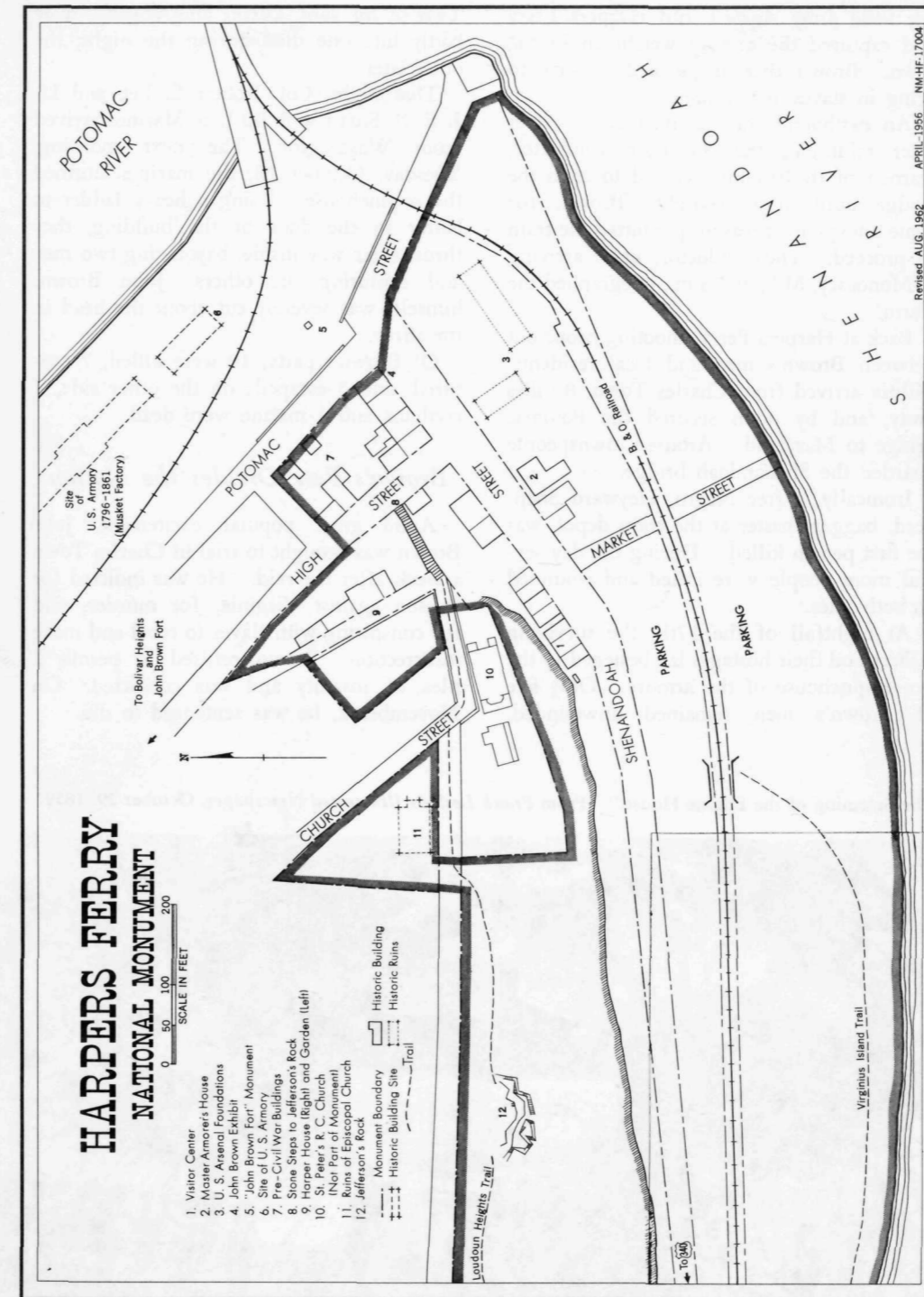
Development of the monument is part of MISSION 66, a 10-year program to develop and staff the areas of the National Park System so that they can be used and enjoyed by both present and future generations.

A superintendent, whose address is Harpers Ferry, W. Va., is in immediate charge of the monument.

America's Natural Resources

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



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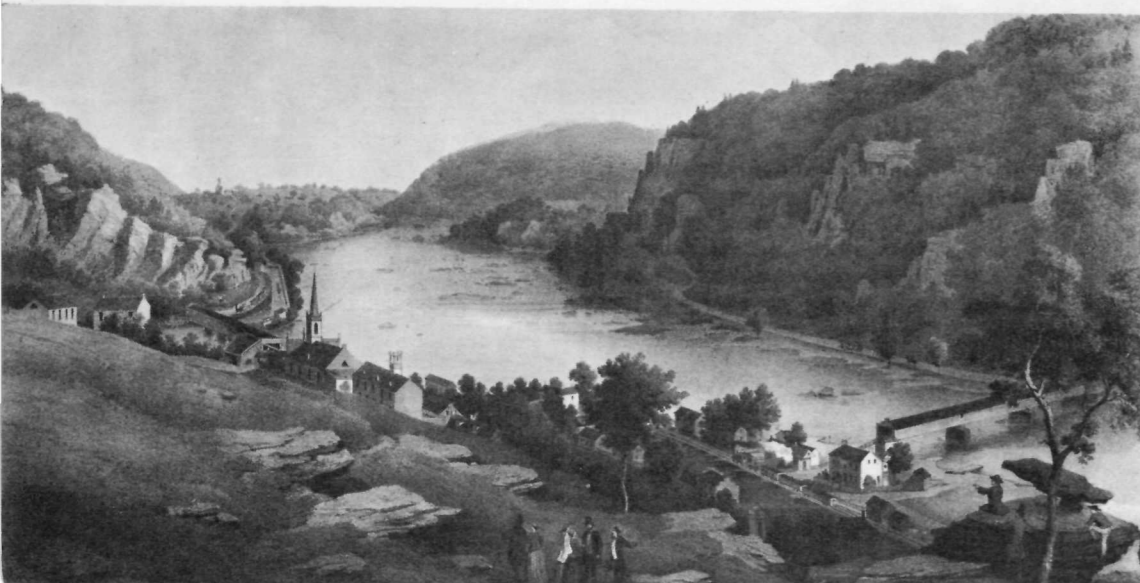
(Cover) Harpers Ferry as sketched from Maryland Heights after the John Brown Raid. →

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Harpers Ferry from Jefferson Rock. From Beyer's Album of Virginia, 1857.
Courtesy, Library of Congress.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

