

For Immediate Release

**RE: Participants of the John Brown Raid of 1859 commemorated in 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary events**

Was John Brown a “hero” or a “terrorist”? After almost 150 years, many people are still not sure.

But in 2009, you might be able to have your questions answered, as throughout the year, organizations in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland will be commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary the John Brown raid of Harpers Ferry that actually occurred on October 16, 1859. Almost 100 events are already being planned, with some still under consideration.

Throughout the year there will be information available about a plethora of characters tied to the raid. Those characters will include John Blessing, a Charles Town man who befriended John Brown while the abolitionist awaited his trial; Fontaine Beckham, mayor of Harpers Ferry and one of the civilian casualties of the raid; Shields Green, a colored raider who was captured and hanged; Luke Quinn, U.S. Marine and the only military casualty of the raid; and Frederick Douglass, Negro leader who refused to join the raid.

In Chambersburg, Pennsylvania Mrs. Ritner who helped John Brown’s men get to the Kennedy Farm to participate in the raid, and who then helped several of John Brown’s raiders who escaped.

“The Secret Six” who funded John Brown’s activities and the U.S. Marines and their leader, Brevet Colonel Robert E. Lee (U.S. Army) who dramatically captured John Brown on the morning of October 18, 1859, will be featured in special events.

Additionally, academic papers will be presented, walking tours in historic Charles Town and Harpers Ferry will be offered, and dramatic readings of “John Brown’s Body” will be offered. There will be offerings of the play called “Sword of the Spirit” based on letters to and from John Brown and his wife Mary.

And there will be a walk in the footsteps of John Brown and his men from the Kennedy Farm to Harpers Ferry along the actual route they took, on the actual 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, October 16, 2009.

A visit to the town of Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) will give the impression of a Civil War era town, although the town predates 1800. In Charles Town . the Courthouse where John Brown was tried and the site of his execution still exist. The Jefferson County Museum in Charles Town has the wagon he rode on to his execution, the desk from his jail cell and the gurney he was carried back and forth from the courthouse to the jail.

Historians will be on hand to answer questions and debate the raid itself. Authors will discuss the events and John Brown himself. Descendents of people actually involved in the situation will be revisiting the area, including descendents of John Brown.

A special website has been set up to give you details of all the events including contact information. The website will be updated on a regular basis as new activities are planned. Please visit the website at [www.johnbrownhf.com](http://www.johnbrownhf.com) Or call Jefferson County Convention and Visitors Bureau for details at 1-866-HELLO-WV.

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