



# *The Signal Flag*



## **BRANDYWINE VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

**Campaign # 23**

**Skirmish # 2**

**October 2009**

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*From the Rear Ranks:*

### **THE 1860's: SONGS AND MUSIC OF THE CIVIL WAR**

Songs and music of the American Civil War covered every aspect of the conflict and feeling about it. Music was played on the march, in camp, even in battle men marched to the heroic rhythms of drums and often of brass bands. The fear of tedium of sieges was eased by nightly concerts, which often featured requests shouted from both sides of the lines. Around camp there was usually a fiddler or guitarist or banjo player at work, and voices to sing the favorite songs of the era. In fact, Confederate General Robert E. Lee once remarked, "I don't believe we can have an army without music."

There were patriotic songs for each side: the North's "John Brown's Body" that Julia Ward Howe made into "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and the South's "Dixie" (originally a pre-war minstrel show song). Several of the first songs of the war, such as "Maryland! My Maryland!" celebrated secession.

"The Bonnie Blue Flag," another pro-Southern song was so popular in the Confederacy that Union General Benjamin Butler destroyed all the printed copies he could find, jailed the publisher, and threatened to fine anyone – even a child – caught singing the song or whistling the melody. The slaves had their own tradition of songs of hope: "Follow the Drinking Gourd," the words said guardedly – meaning follow the Big Dipper north to the Underground Railroad and freedom.

Soldiers sang sentimental tunes about distant love – the popular "Lorena" and "Aura Lee" (which in the twentieth century became "Love Me Tender") and "The Yellow Rose of Texas" – and songs of loss such as "The Vacant Chair." Other tunes commemorated victory – "Marching Through Georgia" was a vibrant evocation of Sherman's March to the Sea.

Soldiers marched to the rollicking "Eatin' Goober Peas;" they vented their war-weariness with "Hard Times;" they sang about their life in "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground;" they were buried to the soulful strains of "Taps," for the dead of both sides in the Seven Days' Battles. When the guns stopped, the survivors returned to the haunting notes of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

After Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House Virginia on April 9, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln, on one of the last days of his life, asked a Northern band to play "Dixie" saying it had always been one of his favorite tunes. No one could miss the meaning of this gesture of reconciliation, expressed by music.

**Source: *The Civil War Explorer – The 1860s Music, 2005.***

I remain your most obedient servant,  
*Robert Paul Sprague, October 2009*

~ Officers ~

**President:** John Walls  
**Vice President:** Chip Crowe  
**Secretary:** Ted Pawlik  
**Treasurer:** Dave Walter

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**Nominating Committee:**  
Vince Carosella  
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**Trips:** Greg Buss  
**Credentials:** Vacant  
**Greeter:**  
**Publicity:** Bill Stiman  
**Historians:** Bill Sitman and Bob Sprague  
**Social Dir:** Flo Williams

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David Hoffritz, James Lawler, Lynne Fulton

~ Official Sutler ~

Bob Sprague: Books / Periodicals  
610-644-0353

~ Annual Membership ~

Individual \$25.00; Family \$40.00; Student \$15.00  
(Full time student up to age 23)

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Unsolicited articles from our members are welcome.  
Please contact Lynne!

*\*We are wheelchair assessable*

**What is the BVCWRT all about???**

We were founded in 1987. According to our by-laws, "the purpose of the Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table shall be to provide a congenial medium through which persons having a common interest in the events of the American Civil War - its causes and effects, engagements, personages, units, armaments and other things pertaining thereto - may satisfy their interest and broaden individual knowledge through discussion, lectures, field trips and the exchange of books, paper and other data. The purposed is also to consider the preservation and protection of the battlefields, sites, landmarks, relics and collection of the period."

In plain English, we are an organization of diverse people brought together by our common interest in the American Civil War. This interest can range from the casual to the obsessive. We intend to tailor our activities and presentations to appeal to all our members, novice or expert.

**Welcome New Members & Reenlistments**

The Round Table welcomes our new members since our last meeting. Please welcome them and share your Civil War enthusiasm.

**New Members:**

*Welcome to all the new and returning members.*





*Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table*  
*Come to our next meeting*  
*Oct 7, 2009*

**Speaker:** Roger Arthur  
**Topic:** "The Importance of John Brown"  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Place:** West Chester Borough Hall, Gay Street

Many think of John Brown as a fanatic, which he was. Many think of him as a zealous abolitionist, which he was. To Southern Americans John Brown's raid struck at what they feared the most--slave revolt. A slave, could threaten a family living on a plantation miles from help with some number of able-bodied field hands who could murder them in their beds. To these Southerners John Brown tried to incite such an uprising. Southern political "fire eaters" (Secessionists) used Brown's raid to rouse the fears of Southern Democrats-split their party three ways and insured the election of a Republican. They knew that Republican success would bring secession to the "Cotton South." John C. Calhoun had written as early as 1812: "We (the South) will stay in the Union as long as we can control it. When we can no longer control it we will leave it."

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**Roger's Bio:** An interest in history is something I have had since childhood. I studied it in college, taught it in school, read monographs of many prominent historians, read many of the original documents and have visited most of the important Lincoln and Civil War sites throughout the country. I currently teach Modern American History at Bishop Shanahan High School in Downingtown, PA. In the evenings in the Spring and Fall I offer a variety of adult enrichment courses at both the Chester County Night School and the Mainline School Night. These include The War of the Rebellion, "Discover Mr. Lincoln," "Meet Colonel Roosevelt," The American Revolution, World War II and Presidential Greatness. I often speak to Civil War Round Tables and other community groups. This past February I gave a series of seven Lincoln Lectures at the Chester and Delaware County Libraries to commemorate the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. This fall the lectures continue with a first person portrayal of Theodore Roosevelt—"Meet Colonel Roosevelt."

**Education:**

M. A. American History – West Chester University (2003)

**Other Graduate Study:**

Public History – Rutgers University (1998)

American History – Miami University (1968-9)

B. S. Ed History, Government & Speech – Bowling Green State University (1965)

**Professional:**

Teach: Modern American History– Bishop Shanahan High School (Downingtown PA) (2004-Present)

Teach: Adult enrichment courses- Night School for Chester County and Mainline School Night (2001-Present)

"Meet Colonel Roosevelt" – first person portrayal of America's most dynamic President

Lecturer: Historic topics (1991-Present)

Sales: Marketing Department – Sunoco, Inc. (1970-2000)

Taught: American History & Government – Cincinnati Public Schools (1965-1970)

Academic:

The Copperhead Vallandigham (2004) [book-unpublished]

Conference paper: "The 'Copperhead' Vallandigham and the Use of Military

Commissions: A Case Study." James A. Barnes Club Annual History Conference – Temple University (2002)

*Meeting Minutes - September 2, 2009*  
*Submitted by Lynne Fulton*

**President:** John opened the meeting by welcoming back Loretta Thomas who was out due to illness and all the returning and new members.

Mike Kochan brought in A *Courtenay Coal Torpedo* which. Mike made for a program. *(I added some additional information in this month's newsletter on the Courtenay Coal Torpedo from Mike's and John C Wideman's" book on Torpedoes)* Mike also brought in some fragments from Andersonville and string from the prison off limit line.

John thanked Ted Pawlik, our Secretary for sending out Welcome letters to 50 members.

**Treasurer's Report:** Dave Walter gave us our Treasurer's report. Balance beginning for September = \$2,563.65, Preservation donation =\$2,000, New balance = \$2,954.37

**Book Raffle and Sutler:** Through our book raffles and Sutler we earned \$\$980.00 last year that we could use for our Preservation donations. If you have book, pictures, pamphlets or whatever, that you would like to donate to our raffle the money earned will go towards preservation. A donation of \$1000, in Mark Neely name, was made to the Friend of the National Park of Gettysburg. Our total donation for last year was \$2100.

**Website:** Jim Lawler, our webmaster has updated our website with our current schedule and any activities that are being planned for this year. Please view our website throughout the year for information concerning our Round Table. <http://bvcwrt.home.comcast.net>

**Special Events:** Greg Buss is again planning our next Field Trip which will be Manassas, VA to study the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Manassas. We discussed an overnight vs a day trip to Manassas. A vote was taken and it looks like a Day Trip won. A day trip will cost \$50.00 pp plus trip for Driver and money towards the guide which will be Gary Eckelberger. The dates picked were either April 10 or April 24. Greg will get back to us with more information.

McPherson to speak at Villanova on Sept 20, 2009

Roger Arthur will be teaching one class and hosting a Field Trip for Chester County Adult Night School: Sept 22 – he will start “The Civil War: An Advanced Discussion” using James McPherson’s “the Mighty Scourge” Perspectives on the Civil War and Tried by war: Abraham Lincoln’s as Commander-in-Chief. Oct 17- host a trip; that we ourselves took last year, called “Assassins on the Run” must have reservations in by Sept15. For more information check [www.chestercountynightschool.org](http://www.chestercountynightschool.org)

Preservation Fund Raiser - Roger Arthur will do “Meet Colonel Roosevelt”, location and time will be announced later.

Banquet will be May 25<sup>th</sup> at the Elks Club again this year. More information will be forth coming.

**Speaker:** Jim Lawler: “Story of a Survivor” talked about his great grandfather who received the Medal of Honor and his surviving Libby Prison, Bell Island, Andersonville and the Sultana disaster, living into his 80’s.

<http://bvcwrt.home.comcast.net>

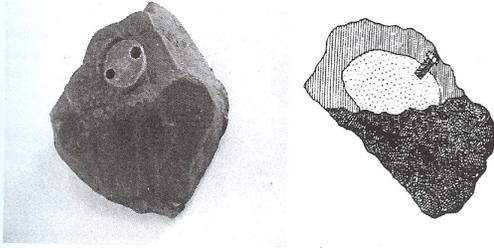


FIGURE 40

The Type 21 Courtenay coal torpedo. Declared by Jefferson Davis as the perfect weapon, this torpedo created fear and panic among Union naval officers. The Union command took the unusual position of ordering anyone found with this torpedo to be executed on the spot without hearing or trial. (UR) Drawing from Barnes. (UL) An original coal torpedo.

**Coal Torpedo** – In General Orders No.184, dated March 20, 1864, Rear-Admiral David D. Porter reported:

*The enemy have adopted new invention to destroy human life and vessels in the shape of torpedoes, and an articles resembling coal, which is to be placed in our coal piles for the purpose of blowing the vessels up, or injuring them. Officers will have to be careful in overlooking coal barges. Guards will be placed over them at all times, and anyone found attempting to place any of these things amongst the coal will be shot on the spot. The same policy will be adopted toward those persons who are caught planting torpedoes, or floating them down, or with any of these inventions in their possessions (ORN1/26/184).*

One January 19, 1864, Captain Thomas E. Courtenay, CSA, inventor of the coal torpedo wrote:

*The casting have been completed some time, and the coal is so perfect that the most critical eye could not detect it. The President thinks them perfect....ORN 1/26/186)*

What Courtenay invented was a piece of hollow case iron shaped like a lump of coal. The device was filled with black powder and sealed with a threaded screw. The small hole of the screw was filled with dirt. When the device was placed in a firebox, the case iron would heat up to the point that the black powder ignited. The resulting pressure burst the cast iron device and exploded the boiler above the firebox.

The coal Torpedoes are believed to have been used. However, there is no specific instance in which the coal torpedo was positively identified as the damage causing agent. A coal torpedo was blamed for the sinking of the *Greyhound*, General Butler's command boat on the James River. There is some belief that a coal torpedo caused the *Sultana* tragedy at the war's end. A problem in identifying such incidents is that boilers on occasion exploded from mishandling by the engineers of by structural failure.

In a variation on the theme, there is one report from the western theater that Confederate operators had taken wood, hollowed it out and filled it with black powder. The wood was intended to be used as fuel aboard ships went coal was not available. These devices were apparently discovered before they could be used. Wood would probably not contain black powder deflagration sufficiently to explode. The wood would probably crack and expose the black powder to the fire before any serious explosion could take place.

A possible use of the black powder filled wood was by the "boat burners," a group of Confederate operatives who set fire to over 70 Union transports and other vessels using incendiary devices, including the Courtenay coal torpedo. However, there is life after death. In World War II, the German secret service used coal torpedoes as sabotage devices. The device was a little more sophisticated only in the explosive and detonator use. The Japanese secret service in World War II was not to be outdone. The Japanese coal torpedo device was an earthenware container of irregular shape and size, coated with black bitumen paint to give it the appearance of anthracite coal. The explosive used was RDX (cyclonite), a modern explosive. The igniter was a copper tube with a black powder initiator, which, in turn, fired a detonator. **From: "Torpedoes; Another look at the infernal machines of the Civil War" by Michael Kochan and John C Wideman.**



## John Brown - Early Years

John Brown was born May 9, 1800, in Torrington, Connecticut. He was the fourth of the eight children of Owen Brown (February 16, 1771 – May 8, 1856) and Ruth Mills (January 25, 1772 – December 9, 1808) and grandson of Capt. John Brown (1728–1776).<sup>[6]</sup> In 1805, the family moved to Hudson, Ohio, where Owen Brown opened a tannery. Brown's father became a supporter of the Oberlin Institute (original name of Oberlin College) in its early stage, although he was ultimately critical of the school's "Perfectionist" leanings, especially renowned in the preaching and teaching of Charles Finney and Asa Mahan. Brown withdrew his membership from the Congregational church in the 1840s and never

officially joined another church, but both he and his father Owen were fairly conventional evangelicals for the period with its focus on the pursuit of personal righteousness. Brown's personal religion is fairly well documented in the papers of the Rev Clarence Gee, a Brown family expert, now held in the Hudson [Ohio] Library and Historical Society. As a child, Brown lived briefly in Ohio with Jesse R. Grant, father of future general and U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>[7]</sup> At the age of 16, John Brown left his family and went to Plainfield, Massachusetts, where he enrolled in a preparatory program. Shortly afterward, he transferred to the Morris Academy in Litchfield, Connecticut.<sup>[8]</sup> He hoped to become a Congregationalist minister, but money ran out and he suffered from eye inflammations, which forced him to give up the academy and return to Ohio. In Hudson, he worked briefly at his father's tannery before opening a successful tannery of his own outside of town with his adopted brother.

In 1820, Brown married Dianthe Lusk. Their first child, John Jr, was born 13 months later. In 1825, Brown and his family moved to New Richmond, Pennsylvania, where he bought 200 acres (81 hectares) of land. He cleared an eighth of it and built a cabin, a barn, and a tannery. Within a year the tannery employed 15 men. Brown also made money raising cattle and surveying. He helped to establish a post office and a school. During this period, Brown operated an interstate business involving cattle and leather production along with a kinsman, Seth Thompson, from eastern Ohio. In 1831, one of his sons died. Brown fell ill, and his businesses began to suffer, which left him in terrible debt. In the summer of 1832, shortly after the death of a newborn son, his wife Dianthe died. On June 14, 1833, Brown married 16-year-old Mary Ann Day (April 15, 1817—May 1, 1884), originally of Meadville, Pennsylvania. They eventually had 13 children, in addition to the seven children from his previous marriage.

In 1836, Brown moved his family to Franklin Mills, Ohio (now known as Kent). There he borrowed money to buy land in the area, building and operating a tannery along the Cuyahoga River in partnership with Zenas Kent. [4] He suffered great financial losses in the economic crisis of 1839, which struck the western states more severely than had the Panic of 1837. Following the heavy borrowing trends of Ohio, many businessmen like Brown trusted too heavily in credit and state bonds and paid dearly for it. In one episode of property loss, Brown was even jailed when he attempted to retain ownership of a farm by occupying it against the claims of the new owner. Like other determined men of his time and background, he tried many different business efforts in an attempt to get out of debt. Along with tanning hides and cattle trading, he also undertook horse and sheep breeding, the last of which was to become a notable aspect of his pre-public vocation.

In 1837, in response to the murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy, Brown publicly vowed: "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery!" Brown was declared bankrupt by a federal court on September 28, 1842. In 1843, four of his children died of dysentery. As Louis DeCaro Jr shows in his biographical sketch (2007), from the mid-1840s Brown had built a reputation as an expert in fine sheep and wool, and entered into a partnership with Simon Perkins Jr of Akron, Ohio, whose flocks and farms were managed by Brown and sons. Brown eventually moved into a home with his family across the street from the Perkins' Mansion located on Perkins Hill. Both homes still remain and are owned and operated by the Summit County Historical Society. As Brown's associations grew among sheep farmers of the region, his expertise was often discussed in agricultural journals even as he widened the scope of his travels in conjunction with sheep and wool concerns (which often brought him into contact with other fervent anti-slavery people as well). In 1846, Brown and Perkins set up a wool commission operation in Springfield, Mass., to represent the interests of wool growers against the dominant interests of New England's manufacturers. Brown naively trusted the manufacturers at first, but soon came to realize they were determined to maintain control of price setting and feared the empowerment of the farmers. To make matters worse, the sheep farmers were largely unorganized and unwilling to improve the quality and production of their wools for market. As shown in the *Ohio Cultivator*, Brown and other wool growers had already complained about this problem as something that hurt U.S. wools abroad. Brown made a last-ditch effort to overcome the manufacturers by seeking an alliance with European-based manufacturers, but was ultimately disappointed to learn that they also wanted to buy American wools cheaply. Brown traveled to England to seek a higher price. The trip was a disaster as he incurred a loss of \$40,000 (over \$980,000 in today's dollars), of which Col. Perkins bore the lion's share.



#### First known photograph of John Brown, c.1846

The Perkins and Brown commission operation closed in 1849; subsequent lawsuits tied up the partners for several more years, though popular narrators have exaggerated the unfortunate demise of the firm with respect to Brown's life and decisions. Perkins absorbed much of the loss, and their partnership continued for several more years, Brown nearly breaking even by 1854. The men remained friends after ending their partnership amicably. Brown was a man of great talent and judgement in farming and sheep raising, but he was not a business administrator. The Perkins and Brown years not only reveal Brown as a man with a widely appreciated specialization (long since forgotten), but reflect his perennial zeal for the underdog

which drove him to struggle on behalf of the economically vulnerable farmers of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and western Virginia a decade before his guerrilla activities in Kansas.



#### Homestead in New York

John Brown's Farm, North Elba, New York In 1848, Brown heard of Gerrit Smith's Adirondack land grants to poor black men, and decided to move his family among the new settlers. He bought land near North Elba, New York (near Lake Placid), for \$1 an acre, although he spent little time there. After he was executed, his wife took his body there for burial. Since 1895, the farm has been owned by New York state. [9] The John Brown Farm and Gravesite is now a National Historic Landmark.

#### Actions in Kansas

In 1855, Brown learned from his adult sons in the Kansas territory that pro-slavery forces there were militant and that their families were completely unprepared to face attack. Determined to protect his family and oppose the advances of pro-

slavery supporters, Brown left for Kansas, enlisting a son-in-law and making several stops just to collect funds and weapons. As reported by the New York *Tribune*, Brown stopped en route to participate in an anti-slavery convention that took place in June 1855 in Albany, New York. Despite the controversy that ensued on the convention floor regarding the support of violent efforts on behalf of the free state cause, several individuals provided Brown some solicited financial support. As he went westward, however, Brown found more militant support in his home state of Ohio, particularly in the strongly anti-slavery Western Reserve section where he had been reared.

## Pottawatomie

### Main article: [Pottawatomie Massacre](#)



John Steuart Curry, *Tragic Prelude*, John Brown and the clash of forces in Bleeding Kansas

Brown and the free state settlers were optimistic that they could bring Kansas into the union as a slavery-free state. But in late 1855 and early 1856 it was increasingly clear to Brown that pro-slavery forces were willing to violate the rule of law in order to force Kansas to become a slave state. Brown believed that terrorism, fraud, and eventually deadly attacks became the obvious agenda of the pro-slavery supporters, then known as "Border Ruffians." After the winter snows thawed in 1856, the pro-slavery activists

began a campaign to seize Kansas on their own terms. Brown was particularly affected by the Sacking of Lawrence in May 1856, in which a sheriff-led posse destroyed newspaper offices and a hotel. Only one man was killed, and it was a Border Ruffian. Preston Brooks's caning of anti-slavery Senator Charles Sumner also fueled Brown's anger. These violent acts were accompanied by celebrations in the pro-slavery press, with writers such as Benjamin Franklin Stringfellow of the *Squatter Sovereign* proclaiming that pro-slavery forces "are determined to repel this Northern invasion, and make Kansas a Slave State; though our rivers should be covered with the blood of their victims, and the carcasses of the Abolitionists should be so numerous in the territory as to breed disease and sickness, we will not be deterred from our purpose" (quoted in Reynolds, p. 162). Brown was outraged by both the violence of the pro-slavery forces, and also by what he saw as a weak and cowardly response by the antislavery partisans and the Free State settlers, who he described as "cowards, or worse" (Reynolds pp. 163–164). Biographer Louis A. DeCaro Jr. further shows that Brown's beloved father, Owen, had died on May 8, 1856 and correspondence indicates that John Brown and his family received word of his death around the same time. The emotional darkness of the hour was intensified by the real concerns that Brown had for the welfare of his sons and the free state settlers in their vicinity, especially since the sacking of Lawrence seems to have signaled an all-out campaign of violence by pro-slavery forces. Brown conducted surveillance on encamped "ruffians" in his vicinity and learned that his family was marked for attack, and furthermore was given reliable information as to pro-slavery neighbors who had aligned and supported these forces. The pro-slavery men did not necessarily own any slaves, although the Doyles (three of the victims) were slave hunters prior to settling in Kansas. According to Salmon Brown, when the Doyles were seized, Mahala Doyle acknowledged that her husband's "devilment" had brought down this attack to their doorstep – further signifying that the Browns' attack was probably grounded in real concern for their own survival.

Sometime after 10:00 pm May 24, 1856, it is suspected they took five pro-slavery settlers – James Doyle, William Doyle, Drury Doyle, Allen Wilkinson, and William Sherman – from their cabins on Pottawatomie Creek and hacked them to death with broadswords. Brown later claimed he did not participate in the killings, however he did say he approved of them.

### Later years - Gathering forces

By November 1856, Brown had returned to the East to solicit more funds. He spent the next two years traveling New England raising funds. Amos Adams Lawrence, a prominent Boston merchant, contributed a large amount of capital. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, secretary for the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee, introduced Brown to several influential abolitionists in the Boston area in January 1857. They included William Lloyd Garrison, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Theodore Parker and George Luther Stearns, and Samuel Gridley Howe. A group of six wealthy abolitionists – Sanborn, Higginson, Parker, Stearns, Howe, and Gerrit Smith – agreed to offer Brown financial support for his antislavery activities; they would eventually provide most of the financial backing for the raid on Harpers Ferry, and would come to be known as the Secret Six and the Committee of Six. Brown often requested help from them with "no questions asked" and it remains unclear of how much of Brown's scheme the Secret Six were aware.



On January 7, 1858, the Massachusetts Committee pledged to 200 Sharps Rifles and ammunition, which was being stored at Tabor, Iowa. In March, Brown contracted Charles Blair of Collinsville, Connecticut for 1,000 pikes.

**John Brown in 1859** - In the following months, Brown continued to raise funds, visiting Worcester, Springfield, New Haven, Syracuse and Boston. In Boston he met Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He received many pledges but little cash. In March, while in New York City, he was introduced to

Hugh Forbes, an English mercenary, who had experience as a military tactician gained while fighting with Giuseppe Garibaldi in Italy in 1848. Brown hired him to be the drillmaster for his men and to write their tactical handbook. They agreed to meet in Tabor that summer.

Using the alias Nelson Hawkins, Brown traveled through the Northeast and then went to visit his family in Hudson, Ohio. On August 7, he arrived in Tabor. Forbes arrived two days later. Over several weeks, the two men put together a "Well-Matured Plan" for fighting slavery in the South. The men quarreled over many of the details. In November, their troops left for Kansas. Forbes had not received his salary and was still feuding with Brown, so he returned to the East instead of venturing into Kansas. He would soon threaten to expose the plot to the government.



William Maxon house, [Springdale, Iowa](#), Brown's headquarters in 1857-1858.

Because the October elections saw a free-state victory, Kansas was quiet. Brown made his men return to Iowa, where he fed them tidbits of his Virginia scheme. In January 1858, Brown left his men in Springdale, Iowa, and set off to visit Frederick Douglass in Rochester, New York. There he discussed his plans with Douglass, and reconsidered Forbes' criticisms. Brown wrote a Provisional Constitution that would create a government for a new state in the region of his invasion. Brown then traveled to Peterboro, New York and Boston to discuss matters with the Secret Six. In letters to

them, he indicated that, along with recruits, he would go into the South equipped with weapons to do "Kansas work".

Brown and twelve of his followers, including his son Owen, traveled to Chatham, Ontario where he convened on May 8 a Constitutional Convention. The convention was put together with the help of Dr. Martin Delany. One-third of Chatham's 6,000 residents were fugitive slaves, and it was here that Brown was introduced to Harriet Tubman. The convention assembled 34 blacks and 12 whites to adopt Brown's Provisional Constitution. According to Delany, during the convention, Brown illuminated his plans to make Kansas rather than Canada the end of the Underground Railroad. This would be the Subterranean Pass Way. He never mentioned or hinted at the idea of Harpers Ferry. But Delany's reflections are not entirely trustworthy. By 1858, Brown was no longer looking toward Kansas and was entirely focused on Virginia. Other testimony from the Chatham meeting suggests

Brown did speak of going South. Brown had long used the terminology of the Subterranean Pass Way from the late 1840s, so it is possible that Delany conflated Brown's statements over the years. Regardless, Brown was elected commander-in-chief and he named John Henrie Kagi as Secretary of War. Richard Realf was named Secretary of State. Elder Monroe, a black minister, was to act as president until another was chosen. A.M. Chapman was the acting vice president; Delany, the corresponding secretary. Either during this time or shortly after, the Declaration of the Slave Population of the U.S.A. was written.

Although nearly all of the delegates signed the Constitution, very few delegates volunteered to join Brown's forces, although it will never be clear how many Canadian expatriates actually intended to join Brown because of a subsequent "security leak" that threw off plans for the raid, creating a hiatus in which Brown lost contact with many of the Canadian leaders. This crisis occurred when Hugh Forbes, Brown's mercenary, tried to expose the plans to Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson and others. The Secret Six feared their names would be made public. Howe and Higginson wanted no delays in Brown's progress, while Parker, Stearns, Smith and Sanborn insisted on postponement. Stearn and Smith were the major sources of funds, and their words carried more weight.

To throw Forbes off the trail and to invalidate his assertions, Brown returned to Kansas in June, and he remained in that vicinity for six months. There he joined forces with James Montgomery, who was leading raids into Missouri. On December 20, Brown led his own raid, in which he liberated eleven slaves, took captive two white men, and stole horses and wagons. On January 20, 1859, he embarked on a lengthy journey to take the eleven liberated slaves to Detroit and then on a ferry to Canada.

Over the course of the next few months he traveled again through Ohio, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts to draw up more support for the cause. On May 9, he delivered a lecture in Concord, Massachusetts. In attendance were Bronson Alcott, Rockwell Hoar, Emerson and Thoreau. Brown also reconnoitered with the Secret Six. In June he paid his last visit to his family in North Elba, before he departed for Harpers Ferry.



## Raid

Main article: [John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry](#)

*Harper's Weekly* illustration of U.S. Marines attacking John Brown's "Fort"

Brown arrived in Harpers Ferry on July 3, 1859. A few days later, under the name Isaac Smith, he rented a farmhouse in nearby Maryland. He awaited the arrival of his recruits. They never materialized in the numbers he expected. In late August he met with Douglass in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where he revealed the Harpers Ferry plan. Douglass expressed severe reservations, rebuffing Brown's pleas to join the mission. Douglass had actually known about Brown's plans from early in 1859 and had made a number of efforts to discourage blacks from enlisting.

In late September, the 950 pikes arrived from Charles Blair. Kagi's draft plan called for a brigade of 4,500 men, but Brown had only 21 men (16 white and 5 black: three free blacks, one freed slave, and a fugitive slave). They ranged in age from 21 to 49. Twelve of them had been with Brown in Kansas raids.

On October 16, 1859, Brown (leaving three men behind as a rear guard) led 19 men in an attack on the Harpers Ferry Armory. He had received 200 Beecher's Bibles -- breechloading .52 caliber Sharps carbines -- and pikes from northern abolitionist societies in preparation for the raid. The armory was a large complex of buildings that contained 100,000 muskets and rifles, which Brown planned to seize and use to arm local slaves. They would then head south, drawing off more and more slaves from plantations, and fighting only in self-defense. As Frederick Douglass and Brown's family testified, his strategy was essentially to deplete Virginia of its slaves, causing the institution to collapse in one county after another, until the movement spread into the South, essentially wreaking havoc on the economic viability of the pro-slavery states. Thus, while violence was essential to self-defense and advancement of the movement, Brown's hope was to limit and minimize bloodshed, not ignite a slave insurrection as many have charged. From the Southern point of view, of course, any effort to arm the enslaved was perceived as a definitive threat.

Initially, the raid went well, and they met no resistance entering the town. They cut the telegraph wires and easily captured the armory, which was being defended by a single watchman. They next rounded up hostages from nearby farms, including Colonel Lewis Washington, great-grandnephew of George Washington. They also spread the news to the local slaves that their liberation was at hand. Things started to go wrong when an eastbound Baltimore & Ohio train approached the town. The train's baggage master tried to warn the passengers. Brown's men yelled for him to halt and then opened fire. The baggage master, Hayward Shepherd, became the first casualty of John Brown's war against slavery. Ironically, Shepherd was a free black man. Two of the hostages' slaves also died in the raid.<sup>[14]</sup> For some reason, after the shooting of Shepherd, Brown allowed the train to continue on its way.

A. J. Phelps, the Through Express passenger train conductor, sent a telegram to W. P. Smith, Master of Transportation of the B. & O. R. R., Baltimore:

*Monocacy, 7.05 A. M., October 17, 1859.*

*Express train bound east, under my charge, was stopped this morning at Harper's Ferry by armed abolitionists. They have possession of the bridge and the arms and armory of the United States. Myself and Baggage Master have been fired at, and Hayward, the colored porter, is wounded very severely, being shot through the body, the ball entering the body below the left shoulder blade and coming out under the left side.*<sup>[15]</sup>

News of the raid reached Baltimore early that morning and then on to Washington by late morning.

In the meantime, local farmers, shopkeepers, and militia pinned down the raiders in the armory by firing from the heights behind the town. Some of the local men were shot by Brown's men. At noon, a company of militia seized the bridge, blocking the only escape route. Brown then moved his prisoners and remaining raiders into the engine house, a small brick building at the entrance to the armory. He had the doors and windows barred and loopholes were cut through the brick walls. The surrounding forces barraged the engine house, and the men inside fired back with occasional fury. Brown sent his son Watson and another supporter out under a white flag, but the angry crowd shot them. Intermittent shooting then broke out, and Brown's son Oliver was wounded. His son begged his father to kill him and end his suffering, but Brown said "If you must die, die like a man." A few minutes later he was dead. The exchanges lasted throughout the day.

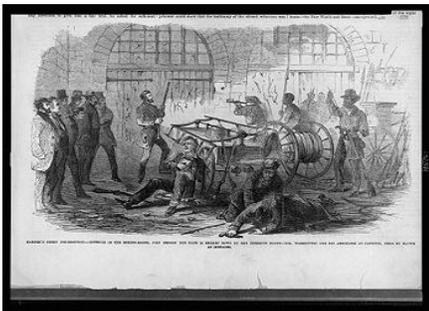


Illustration of the interior of the Fort immediately before the door is broken down

By the morning of October 18 the engine house, later known as John Brown's Fort, was surrounded by a company of U.S. Marines under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee of the United States Army. A young Army lieutenant, J.E.B. Stuart, approached under a white flag and told the raiders that their lives would be spared if they surrendered. Brown refused, saying, "No, I prefer to die here." Stuart then gave a signal. The Marines used sledge hammers and a make-shift battering-ram to break down the engine room door. Lieutenant Israel Greene cornered Brown and struck him several times, wounding his head. In three minutes Brown and the survivors were captives. Altogether Brown's men killed four people, and wounded

nine. Ten of Brown's men were killed (including his sons Watson and Oliver). Five of Brown's men escaped (including his son Owen), and seven were captured along with Brown. Among the killed raiders were John Henry Kagi; Lewis Sheridan Leary and Dangerfield Newby; those hanged besides Brown were John Anthony Copeland, Jr. and Shields Green

## Imprisonment and trial

Brown and the others captured were held in the office of the armory. On October 18, 1859, Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise, Virginia Senator James M. Mason, and Representative Clement Vallandigham of Ohio arrived in Harpers Ferry. Mason led the three-hour questioning session of Brown.

Although the attack had taken place on Federal property, Wise ordered that Brown and his men would be tried in Virginia (perhaps to avert Northern political pressure on the Federal government, or in the unlikely event of a presidential pardon). The trial began October 27, after a doctor pronounced Brown fit for trial. Brown was charged with murdering four whites and a black, with conspiring with slaves to rebel, and with treason against Virginia. A series of lawyers were assigned to Brown, who included Lawson Botts, Thomas C. Green, Samuel Chilton, a lawyer from Washington D.C., and George Hoyt, but it was Hiram Griswold, a lawyer from Cleveland, Ohio who concluded the defense on October 31. In his closing statement, Griswold argued that Brown could not be guilty of treason against a state to which he owed no loyalty, that Brown had not killed anyone himself, and that the failure of the raid indicated that Brown had not conspired with slaves. Andrew Hunter, the local district attorney, presented the closing arguments for the prosecution.

On November 2, after a week-long trial and 45 minutes of deliberation, the Charles Town jury found Brown guilty on all three counts. Brown was sentenced to be hanged in public on December 2. In response to the sentence, Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked that "[John Brown] will make the gallows glorious like the Cross." Cadets from the Virginia Military Institute under the leadership of General Francis H. Smith and Major Thomas J. Jackson (who would earn the nickname "Stonewall" less than two years later) were called into service as a security detail in the event Brown's supporters attempted a rescue.

“ I had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case), had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!"

Excerpt from a speech given by John Brown in court after his conviction, John Brown's Last Speech, 10/2/ 1859

During his month in jail, Brown was allowed to send and receive correspondence. He refused to be rescued by Silas Soule, a friend from Kansas who had somehow infiltrated the prison. Brown said that he was ready to die as a martyr, and Silas left him to be executed. More importantly, many of Brown's letters exuded high tones of spirituality and conviction and, when picked up by the northern press, won increasing numbers of supporters in the North as they simultaneously infuriated many in the South. On December 1, his wife joined him for his last meal. She was denied permission to stay for the night, prompting Brown to lose his composure for the only time through the ordeal.

On the morning of December 2, Brown read his Bible and wrote a final letter to his wife, which included his will. At 11:00 he was escorted through a crowd of 2,000 soldiers. Among them were future Confederate general Stonewall Jackson and John Wilkes Booth, who borrowed a militia uniform to gain admission to the execution.<sup>[16]</sup>

Brown was accompanied by the sheriff and his assistants, but no minister since he had consistently rejected the ministrations of pro-slavery clergy. Since the region was in the grips of virtual hysteria, most northerners, including journalists, were run out, and it is unlikely any anti-slavery clergyman would have been safe, even if one were to have sought to visit Brown. Likely drawing strength from correspondence from northern clergy, he elected to receive no religious services in the jail or at the scaffold. He was hanged at 11:15 a.m. and pronounced dead at 11:50 a.m., and his body was placed in a wooden coffin with the noose still around his neck. On the day of his death he wrote "I, John Brown, am now

quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had, as I now think, vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done."

In 1864, his wife Mary Ann and some of Brown's remaining children moved to Red Bluff, California. At some point during their westward journey, Southern militants heard of their presence on the trail and sought to attack them, but the Browns were able to evade them.

John Brown is buried on the John Brown Farm in North Elba, New York, on the outskirts of Lake Placid. The farm and grave are located near Old Military Road. Also buried near Brown are his sons [Oliver Brown](#) and [Watson Brown](#). The tombstone of Captain John Brown (1728-1776){See Note # 2 below} is on the grave of his grandson John Brown, fanatic who was justly hanged.

**THE AFTER MATH:** The raid on Harpers Ferry is generally thought to have done much to set the nation on a course toward civil war. Southern slaveowners, hearing initial reports that hundreds of abolitionists were involved, were relieved the effort was so small. Yet they feared other abolitionists would emulate Brown and attempt to lead slave rebellions. Therefore the South reorganized the decrepit militia system. These militias, well-established by 1861, became a ready-made Confederate army, making the South better prepared for war.<sup>[17]</sup>

Southern Democrats charged that Brown's raid was an inevitable consequence of the Republican Party's political platform, which they associated with Abolitionism. In light of the upcoming elections in November 1860, the Republican political and editorial response to John Brown tried to distance themselves as much as possible from Brown, condemning the raid and dismissing Brown as an insane fanatic. As one historian explains, Brown was successful in polarizing politics.<sup>[17]</sup>

"Brown's raid succeeded brilliantly. It drove a wedge through the already tentative and fragile Opposition-Republican coalition and helped to intensify the sectional polarization that soon tore the Democratic party and the Union apart."

Many abolitionists in the North viewed John Brown as a martyr who had been sacrificed for the sins of the nation. Immediately after the raid, William Lloyd Garrison published a column in *The Liberator*, judging Brown's raid as "well-intended but sadly misguided" and "an enterprise so wild and futile as this".<sup>[18]</sup> However, he defended Brown's character from detractors in the Northern and Southern press, and argued that those who supported the principles of the American Revolution could not consistently oppose Brown's raid. (Garrison reiterated the point, adding that "whenever commenced, I cannot but wish success to all slave insurrections", in a speech in Boston on the day Brown was hanged).<sup>[19][20]</sup> **For footnote information please check out Wikipedia which is where I obtained this information on John Brown.**



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### *Scheduled Speakers for 2009 - 2010:*

**Sep 2, 2009:** James Lawler – “Survival – Andersonville and Sultana”

**Oct 7, 2009:** Roger Arthur – “Importance of John Brown” (Tentative)

**Nov 4, 2009:** M. Borowick – “Fitz-John Porter’s Court Marital

**Dec 2, 2009:** BVCWRT Members - Discussion of selected topics, plus our Christmas Social

**Jan 6, 2010:** Dennis Kelly – TBA

**Feb 3, 2010:** M. Leepson – “Battle of Monocacy”

**Mar 3, 2010:** J Booz – “Antietam”

**Apr 7, 2010:** Gary Eckelbarger – “2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas” (Tentative)

**Apr ?, 2010:** Field Trip: 2<sup>nd</sup> Manassas (More information to come from Greg Buss)

**May 5, 2010:** ChipCrowe – “Hunter McGuire”

**May 25, 2010: (Annual Banquet): Speaker will be Elizabeth Brown Pryor**, who is an American diplomat and historian. In 2008, Pryor was awarded the Lincoln Prize for *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee through his Private Letters*. She shared the honor with James Oakes, who won for *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics*. Pryor's book is notable for using hundreds of Lee's previously unpublished private letters to create a fresh biography of the Confederate general.