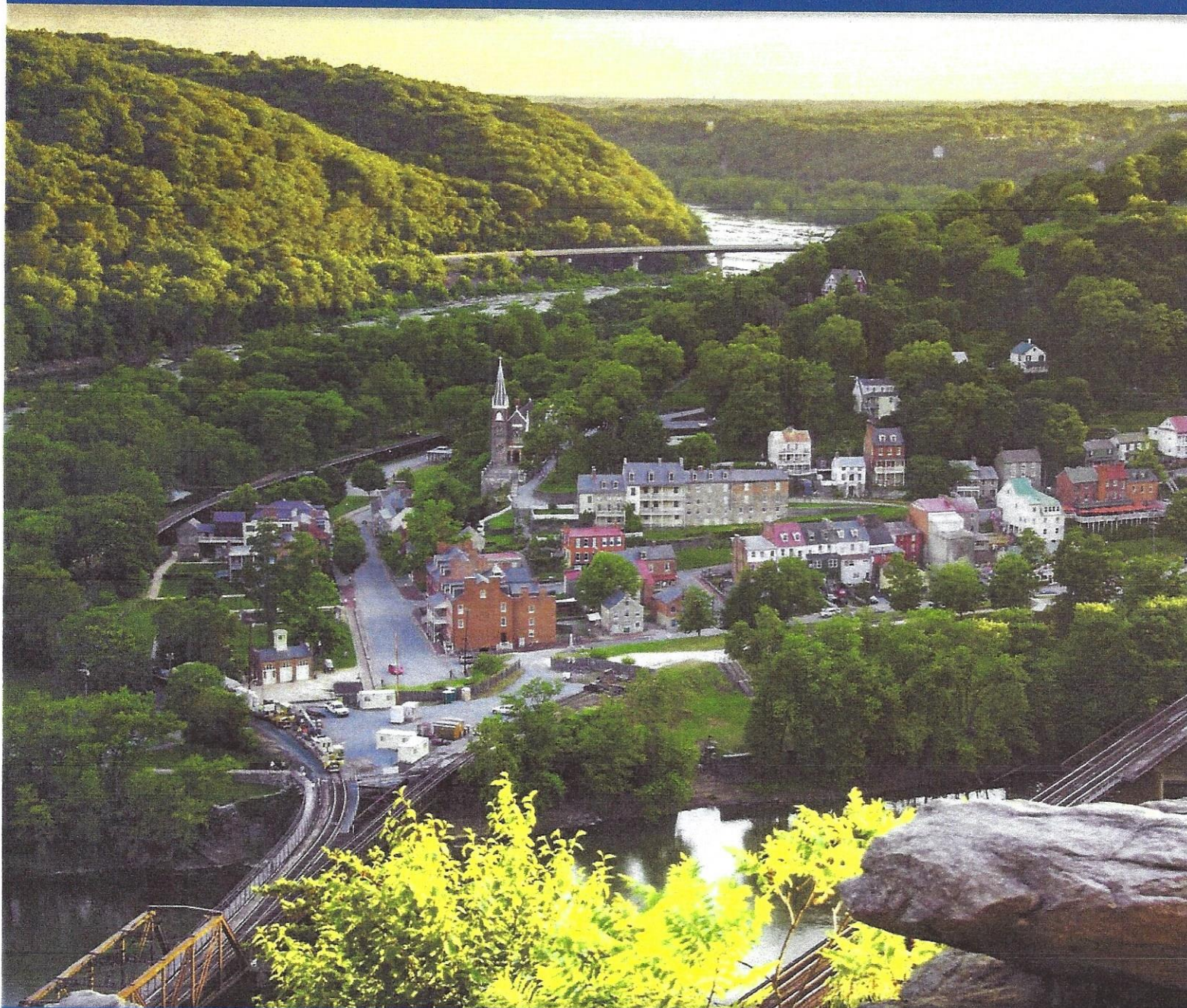


Foundation Document

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia

January 2016



Part 1: Core Components

The core components of a foundation document include a brief description of the park, park purpose, significance statements, fundamental resources and values, other important resources and values, and interpretive themes. These components are core because they typically do not change over time. Core components are expected to be used in future planning and management efforts.

Brief Description of the Park

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park lies at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, where the states of West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland converge. This confluence of the two rivers cuts a gap through the Blue Ridge Mountains, as the Potomac River continues its voyage to the Chesapeake Bay. Located at the point of a peninsula formed by these two rivers, Lower Town is the historic center of Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park was established primarily to preserve historic resources and to commemorate the historic events that occurred at and around Harpers Ferry.

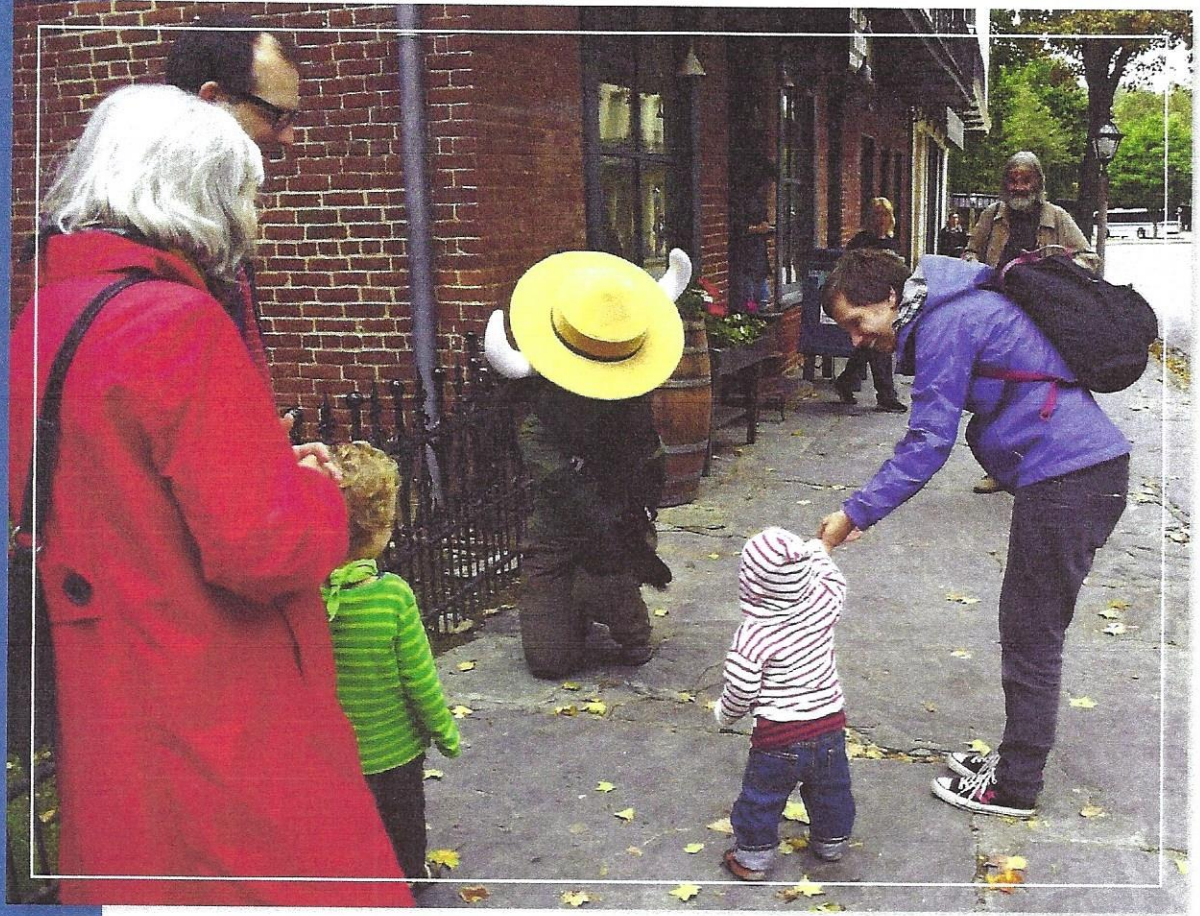
Harpers Ferry National Monument was authorized by Congress in 1944 (Public Law [PL] 78-386). The name was changed to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in 1963. Today, the national historical park contains 3,745 acres, primarily in West Virginia, with additional lands in Maryland and Virginia.

During its earliest period, Harpers Ferry was an important manufacturing and commercial town, using the two rivers for water power and transportation. George Washington recommended a federal armory be located at Harpers Ferry, and the Congress authorized the armory on June 15, 1796. When production began in 1801, it became the nation's second federal armory. By the 1850s, Harpers Ferry was militarily significant because of the US Armory and Arsenal; geographically significant due to the Baltimore and Ohio (B & O) Railroad and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal transportation networks.

In 1859, Harpers Ferry was the scene of the electrifying John Brown Raid, a critical event in the months leading up to the Civil War. Strategically important, due to its location at the gateway into the Shenandoah Valley, Harpers Ferry changed hands eight times during the war. Stonewall Jackson's capture of the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry in September 1862, along with nearly 12,700 US soldiers, set the stage for the great battle at Antietam Creek that ended the South's first invasion of the North. It was the largest number of Union soldiers to surrender during the Civil War.

The Union army quickly reoccupied Harpers Ferry, and in 1862–1864 converted the position into a fortress with strong field fortifications on the summits of Bolivar Heights, Loudoun Heights, and Maryland Heights overlooking the town. In July 1864, the Union army repelled an attack at Harpers Ferry by Lieutenant General Jubal Early's Confederate army. The four-day operation, and the later battle at Monocacy Junction, delayed the Confederate army long enough to allow the Union army to reinforce Washington, DC, and ward off its capture.

From August 1864 to December 1864, Harpers Ferry served as the main base of operations and chief supply depot for Major General Philip S. Sheridan's Union army during the final campaign in the war-torn Shenandoah Valley. Sheridan successfully destroyed Early's army and conquered the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, helping to lead to the Union's victory in the Civil War.



By the end of the Civil War, Harpers Ferry was a ghost of the former town. Mills on Virginus Island and the US arms manufacturing plants on Lower Hall's Island along the Shenandoah and in the Musket Factory yard along the Potomac River were largely destroyed. The US government decided not to rebuild the armory at Harpers Ferry and to dispose of the lands and ruined buildings. Harpers Ferry never fully recovered its industrial importance due to these decisions.

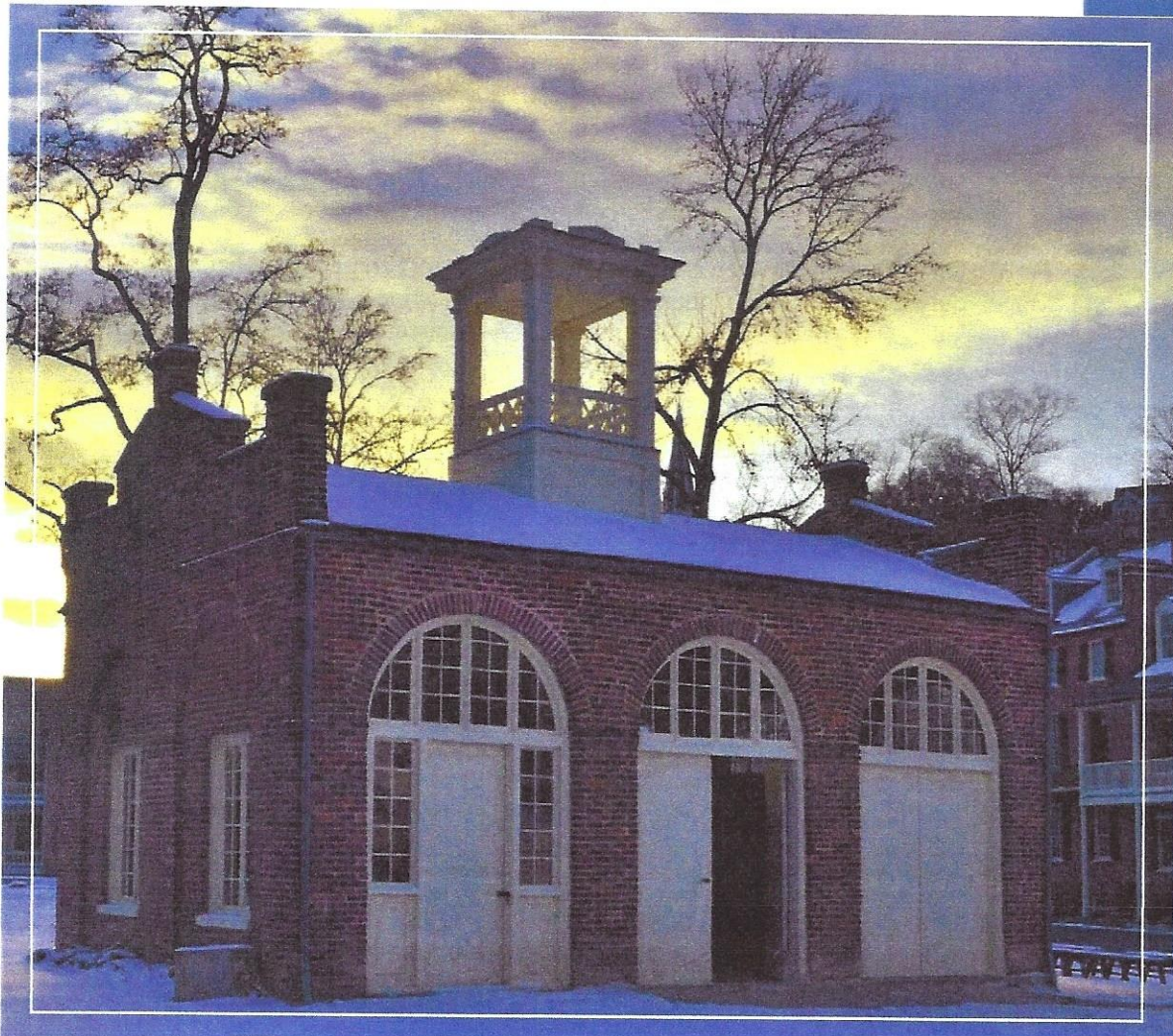
The final events of national significance at Harpers Ferry occurred during the period of 1865–1955 and were connected to civil rights, black history, education, and the Niagara Movement. These events were related to the founding and operation of Storer College. Established through the efforts of the US Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, popularly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, the Freewill Baptist denomination, and a New England philanthropist named John Storer, the school was one of the first to provide education for freed slaves. It was chartered as an integrated institution, a symbol of freedom through education, and a symbol of what John Brown had hoped to achieve. Among the first trustees was Frederick Douglass. It was the location of the second conference of the Niagara Movement in 1906, an event where W. E. B. Du Bois demanded equality and civil rights in his *Address to the Country*, and where the foundation was established for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Today the national historical park consists of portions of the Lower Town, the former Storer College campus, landscapes associated with the national historical park's Civil War significance, and lands preserving the historic viewshed down the Potomac River.

Park Purpose

The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park was drafted through a careful analysis of its enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The park was established when the enabling legislation adopted by Congress was signed into law in 1944 (see appendix A for enabling legislation). The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park. For this national park system unit, the purpose is as follows.

*To preserve HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK for the benefit and enjoyment
of the people as a public national memorial,
commemorating historical events that
occurred at or near Harpers Ferry.*



Park Significance

Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.

The following significance statements have been identified for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. (Please note that the sequence of the statements does not reflect the level of significance.)

1. The geography of the Harpers Ferry area, including the mountain gap at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, made this a key crossroads from the times of the earliest human habitation to the present. The view of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, considered by Thomas Jefferson as "perhaps one of the most stupendous in nature" and "worth a voyage across the Atlantic," continues to inspire people today.
2. George Washington designated Harpers Ferry as the second national armory in 1796 to manufacture firearms for the defense of the United States, making Harpers Ferry a stage for many significant events in American history, including outfitting Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery expedition in 1803.
3. The armory at Harpers Ferry became a center for technological innovations where new ideas about the interchangeability of manufactured parts were tried and tested in the armory workshops, and the successful introduction of large-scale manufacturing transformed Harpers Ferry from a quiet, rural village to one of the leading industrial centers of its day.
4. Harpers Ferry preserves the site of John Brown's Raid of 1859, an epic event in opposition to slavery, which helped precipitate the Civil War.
5. On the border between North and South, Harpers Ferry changed hands eight times during the Civil War. Control of this strategic location—a gateway into the Shenandoah Valley and a backdoor to Washington, DC—resulted in five battles being fought at Harpers Ferry in three successive years.
6. The largest surrender of US troops during the Civil War occurred at Harpers Ferry in September 1862, when Stonewall Jackson captured nearly 12,700 Union forces at the largest battle in present-day West Virginia.
7. Storer College, established in Harpers Ferry in 1867 as a school primarily for former slaves, was one of the first institutions of integrated higher learning in the United States that was open to all applicants, regardless of race or gender, providing educational opportunities to formerly enslaved people during the Reconstruction era and beyond.
8. Storer College was the site of the second Niagara Movement Convention in 1906, where W. E. B. Du Bois presented a progressive philosophy and strategy for civil rights. The conventions led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909.

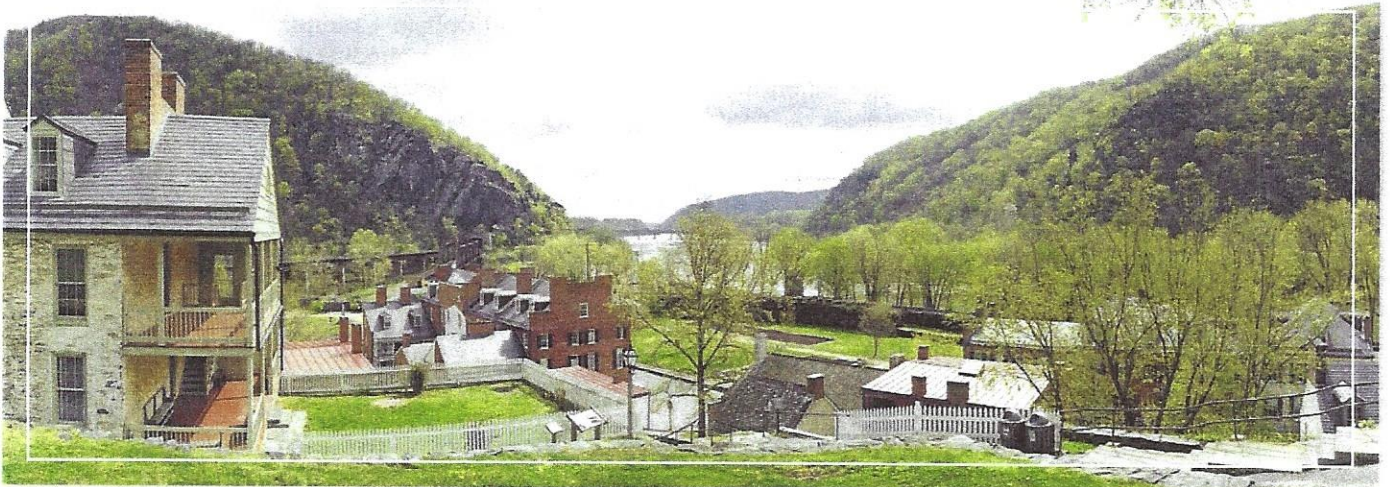
Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are closely related to a park's legislative purpose and are more specific than significance statements.

Fundamental resources and values help focus planning and management efforts on what is truly significant about the park. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the park purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park:

- Historic Structures** – Harpers Ferry National Historical Park reflects more than one event, one date, or one place. It is multi layered, involving a diverse number of people, places, and events, which is reflected in the diversity of historic structures found throughout the park. The historic structures reflect on and connect visitors to the evolution of industry, John Brown's Raid, the Civil War, and African American history. The Lower Town of Harpers Ferry maintains the appearance of a 19th-century community. The historic structures on Camp Hill reflect the establishment and history of armory dwellings and of Storer College. The current List of Classified Structures identifies 147 structures, ranging from John Brown's Fort to more modern structures. All but four structures contribute to the park's National Register of Historic Places significance.
- Cultural Landscapes** – The park's cultural landscapes preserve and interpret the sites where explorers, inventors, raiders, soldiers, townspeople, teachers, and civil rights leaders made their mark on American history. The cultural landscape of historic Lower Town reflects the constraints of the rivers and the surrounding hillsides on the growth of the town and the influence of these rivers on industrial development. Virginus Island contains extensive ruins associated with the 19th-century industrial heritage of Harpers Ferry. Maryland Heights, Bolivar Heights, Camp Hill, Murphy Farm, and School House Ridge reflect Civil War battles and the occupation of Harpers Ferry during the war. The cultural landscape on Camp Hill reflects armory dwellings and yards, the historic Storer College campus, and the Reconstruction era of the nation's history. These cultural landscapes provide immersive opportunities for people to understand historic events in the places where they occurred.



- **Archeological Resources** – Archeological resources play a key role in understanding the history of Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park protects thousands of years of human history, from prehistory to the modern era with 160 state-listed sites documented. Data about the layered historic events that occurred in Harpers Ferry are preserved in the subsurface remains of the archeological record. Information about industrial, military, and domestic activities is revealed through archeological research and provides a new level of understanding about the development of the nation from the 18th to the 20th century. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park's 50 years of robust archeological research give voice to the diverse groups of people who are not well-represented in historical documentation.
- **Museum Collections** – Harpers Ferry National Historical Park contains comprehensive museum collections that are intrinsically tied to the historic events and people that have shaped the history of Harpers Ferry and the nation. Currently, there more than 1.1 million artifacts and objects in the museum collections. Some of the highlights of the museum collections include John Brown's family Bible; an 1819 Hall rifle; the mollusk collection of Dr. Madison Briscoe, instructor at Storer College; and other objects associated with John Brown's Raid in 1859. The museum collections also include artifacts and data collected during archeological investigations at the park, most of which are stored at the NPS Museum Resource Center in Maryland. There are currently 4 on-site museum storage spaces for the museum collections and 16 exhibit spaces within the park. The park displays a limited number of the artifacts from the museum collections and receives approximately 220 research requests per year.
- **Natural Communities** – From the rolling mountains of the Blue Ridge surrounding the historic town to the rushing waters of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, the park's 3,745 acres serve as a refuge from surrounding development, contribute to regional biodiversity, and serve as an important wildlife corridor and habitat. The majority of the park is covered with contiguous eastern deciduous forest that supports more than 170 bird species and more than 30 mammals. The park's rivers, streams, and wetlands also provide habitat for numerous aquatic species. These natural communities sit within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and are where the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers come together to continue toward the bay.
- **Views and Vistas** – Nestled at the gap in the Blue Ridge where the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers meet, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park protects historic views and vistas. These views inspired Thomas Jefferson to write "This scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic." The surrounding mountaintops frame these views and provide people with many vantage points, allowing them to immerse themselves visually in the historic landscape of Lower Town. Scenic easements and vegetative buffers surrounding the park screen many of the visual impacts from modern developments. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park works collaboratively with its neighbors to protect and preserve many of these views and vistas that extend beyond the park's boundary.
- **Connections with the Harpers Ferry and Bolivar Communities** – Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is deeply rooted in its surrounding communities. Through its various relationships and partnerships with nonprofits, local municipalities, and state agencies, the park plays a pivotal role in the interconnected preservation of the historic landscape and views, as well as regional education and interpretive efforts. This relationship means that the preservation of cultural landscapes and historic structures is dependent on a continued collaboration and joint stewardship between the park and the surrounding communities.
- **Monuments and Memorials** – The monuments and memorials at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park provide a commemorative atmosphere that encourages visitors to contemplate significant historic events that occurred here. There are also monuments and memorials dedicated to the legacy of individuals who have influenced the history of Harpers Ferry. Many of these markers honor Civil War events and African American history connected to the area. This collection also includes markers in recognition of those who have donated land or contributed to the preservation and stewardship of the historic setting at Harpers Ferry.