He concluded by saying, "If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places and men for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia, not Fort Sumter, but Harpers Ferry, and the arsenal, not Col. Anderson, but John Brown, began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic."

This tour follows the path of John Brown's Raid from start to finish. Travelers will start at the Kennedy Farmhouse, where Brown and his men stayed in the weeks preceding the attack on Harpers Ferry, and finish at the museum housing the cart that carried John Brown to his execution. The tour will require some moderate walking and admission to various historical sites. Take the path of John Brown and his men as they changed the course of American history and sparked the American Civil War.

"The Harper's Ferry insurrection—The U.S. Marines storming the engine house—Insurgents firing through holes in the doors / from a sketch made on the spot by our special artist." Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, October 29, 1859. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

"Treason" broadside printed in Somersworth, New Hampshire, November 4, 1859. THE EXECUTIVE PAPERS OF GOVERNOR HENRY WISE, LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA. A reproduction of a daguerreotype of John Brown attributed to Martin Lawrence, c.1859. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

THE RAID

On October 16, 1859, John Brown led a party of 18 men into the small town of Harpers Ferry, Virginia. His plan was to galvanize a major slave rebellion in the South by seizing the estimated 100,000 firearms in the federal arsenal, arming slaves in the surrounding area, and moving south along the Appalachian Mountains, gathering more slaves to his cause and creating an unstoppable force that would crumble the institution forever. To his detriment, Brown overestimated the support he would receive and underestimated the rancor of the local townspeople when their livelihood was threatened. Thirty-six hours later, the plan had failed, and Brown was captured.

THE AFTERMATH

On November 2, 1859, John Brown was found guilty of treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, five counts of murder, and inciting an insurrection among Virginia slaves. He was hanged on December 2, 1859 in Charles Town, just a few blocks from the jail and courthouse.

John Brown’s actions and death deepened the divide between the North and South, and he continues to be a controversial figure today. The North found a martyr, and little more than a year later, Union troops marched south singing “John Brown’s Body.” Contemporary luminaries Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman praised the man and his cause. Meanwhile, anger and fear stirred in the South. Feeling it was under attack, the South began building up its militias, paving the way for secession and war.

On May 30, 1881, at the fourteenth anniversary of the founding of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, Frederick Douglass delivered a famous speech on the legacy of John Brown, whom he had known.
John Brown (as “Isaac Smith”) rented this farm, now a National Historic Landmark, from a trustee of the Kennedy estate for $35 in gold for 9 months. From July until the October raid, Brown gathered and trained his Provisional Army, just 4 miles north of Harpers Ferry. At the time of the raid, there were 21 men there, not including Brown: 16 white men (including 3 of Brown’s sons) and 5 black men. Eight of those men marched to Harpers Ferry. After the raid, documents found at the farm, including a provisional constitution, were used against Brown in court. The farmhouse has been restored to its 1859 appearance and is open for tours by appointment only.

STOP 1—KENNEDY FARM

The main part of the Beall-Air was constructed c.1840 by Lewis William Washington on the land of his grandfather Thomas Road. PHOTO BY JCHLC.

TOUR STARTING POINT: Start at the Kennedy farm, a Maryland State Historic Site and National Historic Landmark: 2406 Chestnut Grove Rd, Sharpsburg, MD.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Head southwest on Chestnut Grove Road, go 0.5 miles. Take a slight left onto US-340 South and go 0.3 miles. Turn right onto Old Country Club Road, go 1.5 miles. Cross over Chestnut Grove Road and go 0.5 miles. The next stop, Beall-Air, will be on your right.

STOP 2—BEALL-AIR

Lewis William Washington, the owner of Beall-Air and great-grandnephew of George Washington, inherited several acres of particular interest to John Brown, including a wood from Find tịch the Great and a pair of pistols from Lafayette. John Cook, who served as John Brown’s advance party at Harpers Ferry, befriended Lewis Washington and noted the relics, as well as a tollgate on the Harpers Ferry-Charles Town Turnpike. The property remained in the Allstadt family until the 1923 death of John Thomas Allstadt, the last survivor of the raid. Restoration work has been done to return the property to its 1859 appearance. There are interpretive signs at the site, but it is not yet open to the public.

STOP 3—ALLSTADT HOUSE & ORDINARY

The ground floor of the house was constructed c.1791, when the land belonged to the Lees. It was enlarged by the Allstadt family c.1880. PHOTO BY JCHLC, 2008.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: Head southeast on Old Country Club Road, go 0.5 miles. Turn left onto Old Country Club Road, go 0.2 miles. Turn right onto Valley Road, going roughly 210 feet. From there turn left at the 1st cross street onto US-340 South, go 0.7 miles. Turn right onto Old Country Club Road, go 0.5 miles. Turn right onto Beall-Air Manor Drive and go 0.5 miles. The next stop, Beall-Air, will be on your right.

STOP 4—BESIEGED AND CAPTURED

The raid was initially successful—Brown met little resistance in the town, battered down the doors of the engine house, and in 3 minutes the raid was over. Lt. J.E.B. Stuart was sent to negotiate a surrender, but Brown refused. The Marines sent Lt. J.E.B. Stuart to negotiate a surrender, but Brown refused. The Marines

STOP 5—JAILED

Brown and his raiders were taken to the Charles Town jail, which was torn down in 1919. It sat diagonally across from the courthouse, where the post office now sits. Brown was beaten by 3, 5, 16, and 4, and captured and requested a delay for his trial due to injury, which was not granted. He received medical attention while in jail and was carried to court on a stretcher. He refused膳食 attempts and spent the time furthering the case of abolition through letter-writing and interviews with journalists. While incarcerated he also developed a friendship with his jailer, John Avera.

STOP 6—THE TREASON TRIAL IN CHARLES TOWN

Despite the fact that the raid happened on federal land, Governor Henry Wise yielded that the men be tried in Virginia. The trial began on October 27, just 9 days after Brown’s capture, and ended with the sentence of hanging on November 2. Richard Parker was judge. The defense, which was provided by the state, called no witnesses, and Brown himself did not testify. Hiram Griswold defended the defense’s closing remarks, arguing that Brown could not be found guilty of treason because he was not a resident, that he had not personally killed anyone, and that no slaves had rebelled. The jury deliberated for only 45 minutes before issuing a verdict of guilty. Before sentencing, Brown made the now famous statement, “Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of this ends of justice, and mingle my blood farther with the blood of my children and the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactment, I say let it be done. The Charles Town courthouse was severely damaged during the Civil War. It was renovated and enlarged after the war and is a working courthouse, open to the public.

STOP 7—“I JOHN BROWN...”

John Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859, shortly before noon, on what is now the lawn of the Gibson-Todd House. Both John Wilkes Booth and Thomas Jackson (later known as “Stonewall”) were present among the 2,000 Virginia militia at the execution. A note written by Brown read: “Charles Town, Fe. 2nd, December, 1859. 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.” John Thomas Gibson, county commander of the Virginia Militia and the first to respond at Harpers Ferry, built an imposing Victorian home on the site in 1891. In recognition of his services, Gibson received an original copy of Brown’s provisional constitution as well as the desk on which Brown’s death warrant was signed. A marker for the hanging site was built of stones from the demolished jailhouse. The Gibson-Todd House is a private residence.

STOP 8—JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM

The execution of John Brown in Charles Town, drawn by David Hunter Strickler, known as “Pilke Gravas,” 1861. A REGIONAL HISTORY CENTER.

The fee is $4, and the museum is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11-4, Sunday from 1-5. It houses a vast collection of Civil War relics, as well as many other artifacts related to the rich history of Jefferson County, West Virginia. The fee is $4, and the museum is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11-4, Sunday from 1-5. It houses a vast collection of Civil War relics, as well as many other artifacts related to the rich history of Jefferson County, West Virginia.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: From the Courthouse entrance, head northeast on East Washington Street, toward North Samuel Street, walking roughly 200 feet. Turn left onto the first cross street onto South Samuel Street, go 0.3 miles. John Brown’s hanging site will be on your left. 195 S. Samuel St.

The old Charles Town jail, c.1791, when it was torn down.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: From the Stop 7, return southwest on Samuel Street toward Hunter Street, go 0.3 miles. Cross East Washington Street and go half a block. The final stop, Jefferson County Museum, will be on your right. 200 E. Washington St.

The Gibson-Todd House is a private residence.

FOLLOWING THE TOUR: From the Courthouse entrance, head northeast on East Washington Street, toward North Samuel Street, walking roughly 200 feet. Turn left onto the first cross street onto South Samuel Street, go 0.3 miles. John Brown’s hanging site will be on your left. 195 S. Samuel St.

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