



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Harpers Ferry National
Historical Park

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Harpers Ferry NHP News Release

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Captain Flagg's U.S. Quarter Master City: Approach of Peace 1864

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park invites the public to attend *Captain Flagg's Quarter Master City: Approach of Peace 1864*, December 3,4, 2011. This special living history program offers a glimpse of the town during the Civil War. Flagg's operation provided all the supplies General Philip Sheridan (USA) needed to fight in the Shenandoah Valley. Abraham Lincoln's second election hinged on the success of Sheridan's Valley Campaign. The former U.S. Armory, burned at the outbreak of war, was reclaimed as a wartime supply depot. The country was torn apart by war, but families remained hopeful of reunion with their loved ones. Stroll through the community and look in on the town's simple Yuletide preparations.

Here at Harpers Ferry Union soldiers attempted to create their own version of Christmas at the front, while living in a town of citizens with questionable loyalties. With the prospects of peace still four months away, young Charles Moulton, of the 34th Massachusetts Regiment, stationed in the Provost Marshal's office, mused about happier times at home. In 1864, the country was torn apart by war, but families remained hopeful of reunion with their loved ones.

The event will feature the town under federal occupation. For several months, Harpers Ferry had been the staging area for Union operations in the Shenandoah Valley; successful operations that brought the inevitable end of the conflict ever closer. Troops and supplies steadily poured south from Harpers Ferry by rail and wagon train. Over 60,000 federal soldiers passed through the Shenandoah Valley. Those same means of transportation brought back a steady stream of wounded soldiers, prisoners, and the dead. Buildings at Harpers Ferry that are not used to house supplies are occupied by hospitals, the Christian Commission, and the Sanitary Commission. These organizations provided charity, aid and comfort to soldiers spending another Christmas far from home.

The Civil War determined the freedom of 4 million enslaved people and the future of the Union. John Brown, the abolitionist, was hanged in 1859 for taking up arms against slavery at Harpers Ferry. The same United States that captured Brown and his supporters in 1859, will later assume the role of Brown's liberating army which never materialized at Harpers Ferry. With Lincoln's election in 1860 and the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Brown's dream of an army marching for freedom became a reality and ending slavery by force of arms had become a national policy.

By Christmas 1864, the death toll was rising and the country was still reacting to the recent presidential election. On the home front, Christmas spirit was tempered by concern for the safety of loved ones far from home and in harm's way. Hopes and prayers were that Santa Claus would visit every home, but that a notice of sad tidings from the battlefield would not. The spirit of Christmas, the spirit of hope and charity, the spirit of joy were muted that holiday season, overshadowed by the clouds of war and an occupying army in the field.

Living history talks, tours, and special exhibits, will reveal the past and the present are more similar than one would think. The indomitable spirit of man may find a silver lining in any cloud, even in the clouds of war. It was a fervent hope, for America, and for the troops in the field, that the images of Christmas past and present may, in true Dickensian fashion, help alter the reality of Christmas future, so that all may truly enjoy peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

- 12-9 pm** Historic exhibits open.
- 12-2 pm** *“Decking the Halls: Ornaments for the Tree”* Make and take a 19th century style ornament. At the Lyceum Tent. Make real tin tinsel & tin spiral ornaments for your tree!
- 12, 1, 2, 3 & 4 pm** *“Captain Flagg’s US Quarter Master City”: A Ranger Guided Horse and Wagon Tour* Experience the military and civilian workers who transformed the town into a successful war machine. Five tours offered, each beginning on the hour and lasting between 30-45 minutes. Sign up & reserve your free ticket at the Lyceum tent on the Park Green. Begins and ends at the Lyceum Tent.
- 1-2 pm** *“Mail Call: Packages From Home”* Witness local citizens and soldiers gathering to receive their censored mail from the US Provost Marshal’s office. Begins at the Lyceum Tent
- 2-3 pm** *“Caught Yesterday, French Bill, Notorious Murderer and Bushwhacker”*. Follow the Provost Marshal as they deal with the crime and punishment of a well known deserter. Begins at Lyceum Tent. Guided tour including weapons firing and demonstration.
- 3-4 pm** *“Feeding the War Machine: Soft Bread for Sheridan’s Army”* See how 5,000 loaves of bread were made and baked in brick ovens. Meet at the backyard of Roeder’s Confectionery.
- 3-5 pm** *“A Grand Military and Citizen’s Ball”* Join the 34th Massachusetts Officers and their wives as they host a Victorian Dance. Dance instruction provided to period dance music by Wheaton’s Parlor Orchestra.
- 9:30pm** Last park shuttle departs the lower town for entrance station parking.

 Sunday, December 4th, 2011

- 11-4pm** Historic exhibits open
- 12, 1, 2, 3, 4 pm** *“Captain Flagg’s US Quarter Master City”: A Ranger Guided Horse and Wagon Tour.* Experience the military and civilian workers who transformed the town into a successful war machine. Five tours offered, each beginning on the hour and lasting between 30-45 minutes. Sign up & reserve your free ticket at the Lyceum tent on the Park Green. Begins and ends at the Lyceum Tent.
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- 3-4 pm** *“Ho For Christmas”* Carolers, sometimes called ballad mongers, strolled the streets in America tempting pedestrians to purchase sheet music of carols. Join this musical performance in the 2nd floor of the John Brown Museum, Mrs. Stephenson’s Christmas Parlor.
- 4 pm** Special exhibits close.
- 6:30pm** Last park shuttle departs the lower town for entrance station parking.