“Take me back to Harpers Ferry…”

So swoon the opening lyrics of the classic Magpie folk song, familiar to anyone who has ever ridden the park’s shuttle buses. “Being surrounded by such inspiring landscape and a place so rich in human drama inspires the mind and stirs the soul,” says Jim Beckman, one of HFPA’s certified guides. Perhaps that’s why Harpers Ferry is one of those locations that, as the song implies, people do like to return to as often as possible. And on one sultry weekend this past June, they did so in droves: alumni and fans of the Ferry bringing the village alive to celebrate the national park’s 75th anniversary. We hope you’ll enjoy just a few memories of the weekend, collected from some of our participants.

Above: “It was an absolute thrill to be part of the writer’s panel with David Gilbert and Dr. Merritt Roe Smith,” says author and professor Jim Beckman. “When my wife and I first moved to the town several decades ago, the very first book we bought was Dave Gilbert’s [Walker’s Guide to Harpers Ferry].

Below: “Janice and I had the thrill of returning to Harpers Ferry as Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation volunteers for the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park’s 75th anniversary celebration,” writes HFPA/Lewis and Clark Heritage Foundation member Jerry Wilson. “We were stationed at the fine Meriwether Lewis at Harpers Ferry Museum. Also stationed at the museum was Thomas Jefferson [portrayed by Bill Barker], who stated in his writing, Notes on the State of Virginia, ‘This scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic.’”

It was our ‘bible’ in first learning about the town, and I still consult it almost weekly to this very day. And Dr. Smith’s 1977 landmark book on the armory at Harpers Ferry has been on my bookshelf since 1997… I’ve read and re-read it multiple times.”
Above: A number of park alumni participated in a special panel moderated by Doug Perks, certified guide and a former ranger himself. “As I prepared for the Alumni Panel, I thought back to June 1970 when I first wore the green and gray at Harpers Ferry,” recalls Perks. “In those days, cars were parked on the green and on the river side of the railroad tracks. The Visitors Center was in the ‘Stage Coach Inn,’ today’s Bookshop. Rangers were posted in the Master Armorer’s and the Harper House. Each of us took a turn in the parking lot, leading walking tours of the Lower Town, and did foot patrols up to Jefferson’s Rock and out on Virginius Island. But my strongest memory is of how exciting it was to tell the story of Harpers Ferry to Park visitors. Every day I could not wait to get to work!”

Below: “The very best thing about my Harpers Ferry is that it isn’t just mine,” says Catherine Mägi, co-author (with Dennis Frye) of Confluence: Harpers Ferry as Destiny, a comprehensive history of the Ferry. “Harpers Ferry is many stories, many energies, many passionate individuals.” Confluence, released during the 75th Anniversary weekend, seeks to honor this coming-together of so many strands in history, paying special attention to often overlooked or censored voices. Featuring these items in the book “was thrilling for me,” recalls Dennis Frye of the launch. “To have people tell me (even seasoned veterans): ‘I didn’t know that.’ . . . or ‘I never saw that before,’ proved Harpers Ferry is continuous discovery.” Fittingly, the book is dedicated in part to a “confluence” of park alumni, including former superintendents Don Campbell and Rebecca Harriett, along with former supervisory ranger Arnold Schofield.
Call for Dreamers, Planners & Problem Solvers

What does your HFPA membership mean to you? What would you like it to mean? In 2021, your association will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. How can we keep HFPA going strong for generations to come? If you’d like to be part of shaping and implementing an improved membership experience, please consider joining our brand-new, volunteer Membership Committee. Contact Catherine Mägi at cmagi@hfpawv.org for details.

More of Harpers Ferry Preserved: Allstadt’s Corner Transferred to National Park

One October night, nearly 160 years ago, the residents of Allstadt’s Corner found themselves at the epicenter of John Brown’s war on slavery. Two of the Allstadt men, father and son, were taken hostage by Brown’s lead man, John Cook, and hauled away to the infamous armory engine house. Seven additional men, enslaved by the Allstadts, were taken along as well. Less than three years later, as the country waged bloody civil war, Allstadt’s Corner would find itself once more under fire. The property lies near the Schoolhouse Ridge line—in other words, in the midst of the 1862 Battle of Harpers Ferry.

Thanks to the American Battlefield Trust, these thirteen history-soaked acres of Allstadt’s Corner are now protected by Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

“The events at Allstadt’s Corner shaped our nation,” said Superintendent H. Tyrone Brandyburg at the August 17, 2019, land transfer ceremony. “This generous donation to the American people allows the National Park Service to preserve this important place, its lessons and its stories forever. It’s an honor to be entrusted with its care.”

The purchase of Allstadt’s Corner was made possible by gifts from Ellotsville Plantation, Inc., a NPS American Battlefield Protection Program grant, and private individual donations. The Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission, the National Park Foundation, and the West Virginia Division of Culture & History also aided in the acquisition.

The American Battlefield Trust has added 342 acres to the national park since 2002; most of this property is battlefield. Through conservation easement, an additional 200 acres have been preserved as viewsheds.

Following the land transfer ceremony, the site was put to use almost immediately, hosting Joseph McGill, Jr., of the Slave Dwelling Project. On the evening of August 17th—just hours after the transfer—McGill led participants in a unique fireside chat and overnight experience at the property, contemplating some of history’s harder narratives.

This was McGill’s first sleepover in West Virginia, making it the 24th state on his list of overnights. As McGill pointed out, there were only 15 slave states at the start of the Civil War—a reminder that the story of slavery in America extends to both shores, North and South. Learn more about the Slave Dwelling Project at slavedwellingproject.org.

Above: Allstadt’s Corner. Below: Joseph McGill, Jr., of the Slave Dwelling Project hosts a fireside chat at Allstadt’s Corner. (Photo by Jim Silvia)
Connect with us on Social Media!

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Attention Members!
The Association sends out a monthly e-newsletter and occasional updates on special events happening in the Ferry. If you are not receiving this and would like to, please send us your email at info@hfpa.org, or call 304-535-6881. If you are receiving it, please open it—if it is not read after two or three months it will go to your spam folder. We don’t want anyone to miss out on the great things happening here!

Meet Your Park Archeologist. September 16, 2 p.m., John Brown Museum. What’s it like to work as an NPS archeologist? Learn more about the adventure of archeology at Harpers Ferry.


“This Scene is Worth a Voyage Across the Atlantic.” September 28, 1 p.m. (Jefferson Rock) and 3 p.m. (Lower Town). Thomas Jefferson (as portrayed by the renowned Bill Barker) returns to the Ferry to recount his memories of the place that so stirred his imagination.

Reacting to the Raid: Local Militia and the U.S. Marines. October 12-13, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Lower Town. The USMC Historical Company will portray the capture of abolitionist John Brown and explore reactions to the raid.

John Brown and the Night Sky of 1859. October 17, 2 p.m., John Brown Museum. The skies were full of portent in 1859: a massive solar storm sent the colorful aurora, normally reserved for arctic climes, streaking into shockingly southern latitudes. At this program, learn how writers of the day linked the mythological scene to the coming of John Brown.

The Archeology of Harpers Ferry, a History. October 21, 2 p.m., John Brown Museum. Discover how our understanding of the Harpers Ferry story has been fundamentally shaped by archeological research in the park.

Drink Your Apples: Historic Cider Making. October 26-27, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., White Hall Tavern. For centuries, the making of cider has been a traditional way of extending the use of harvest-time apples. It’s also a tasty treat! Explore the process at this demonstration.

Captain Flagg’s U.S. Quartermaster City, 1864: Prospects of Peace. December 7-8, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., Lower Town. How did soldiers and civilians approach a holiday of peace and hope in a time of war? This annual yuletide event explores this question and more.

A New Face in Membership

HFPAS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT Catherine Mägi Oliver, publications specialist since 2017 and coauthor of our newest publication, Confluence, has taken up the challenge of caring for and growing our membership as well.

Catherine’s experience in nonprofit development dates from adolescence, when she co-founded a nonprofit, city-wide musical theater company with her peers (carefully researching the paperwork involved, and teaching grown-ups how to complete it), and then went about town convincing businesses to help her put on a play. Since that time she has continued to lead in fundraising and development roles: serving as co-chair of the William and Mary Public Service Fund, an organization dedicated to providing stipends and post-graduate fellowships for students entering traditionally unpaid clerkships with public service employers; expanding and implementing fundraising for the Eastern Panhandle Empowerment Center, formally Shenandoah Women’s Center; and working three years in major gifts research in a college development office.

Catherine, an avid hiker who describes herself as a “recovering attorney,” adopted an historic Harpers Ferry armorer’s house in 2015, which she and her children have lovingly restored. She continues to be inspired every day by the history written—quite literally—upon its walls.

Catherine seeks to foster a strong and diverse membership community, with increased opportunities for continued on Page 5

continued on Page 5
Recent Donations:
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75th Speaker Series: Exploring the Battles of Harpers Ferry

The 75th Anniversary Weekend may have concluded, but our speaker series continues. Autumn’s offerings will focus on two of the most famous battles Harpers Ferry has endured: John Brown’s 1859 war on slavery, and Stonewall Jackson’s 1862 capture of the massive federal garrison.

On September 14th—during the 157th anniversary of the Battle of Harpers Ferry—two unique Civil War tours will be offered, each by a former park ranger. At 10 a.m. on the Bolivar Heights battlefield, historian Kevin Pawlak will guide participants around the scene of the largest surrender of U.S. troops during the Civil War. Starting at 2 p.m. in the afternoon, Sam Cathey and a crew of living history volunteers will bring the Naval Battery on Maryland Heights to life. A guided hike to the site will depart from the Green at 1:30 p.m.

October 16th marks the 160th anniversary of John Brown’s attack on Harpers Ferry. Former ranger David Fox will lead a morning tour of relevant sites in Harpers Ferry, and continue the story in the afternoon with a tour of nearby Charles Town, the site of Brown’s trial and execution.

A New Face in Membership,
continued from page 4
members to gather, learn, contribute, and simply have fun. She is especially interested in growing the next generation of Harpers Ferry enthusiasts, and would love to hear from members about what you want to see in your association. Feel free to reach out and introduce yourself, and look for a special member survey soon!
To view detailed descriptions of our membership categories or to join online, please visit www.harpersferryhistory.org

☐ I wish to join the Harpers Ferry Park Association (new member)
☐ I wish to renew my membership (renewal)

Please enroll me in the following member category (check one):

☐ $25 Armory Worker – Basic membership for a family.
☐ $25 Sarah Jane Foster – An alternative basic membership for educators.
☐ $50 Millwright – For those members who are frequent visitors to the park.
☐ $100 Master Armorer – A supporting membership category.
☐ $250 Paymaster – For businesses, vendors or family donors who wish to contribute to the Association's mission.
☐ $500 Armory Superintendent – For supporters (individual and corporate) who wish to perpetuate Association and Park education programs.

☐ I am not interested in receiving member benefits, but I would like to make a contribution in the amount of ________ to aid the mission of the Harpers Ferry Park Association.

☐ I am a Charter Member and would like to make a donation of ________.

☐ Check if this is a new address for you.

______________________________________________
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Address

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