John Hall, Superintendent Stubblefield, and the Roots of Prohibition in Harpers Ferry

John Hall is an icon in Harpers Ferry history, and rightfully so. This industrial alchemist is best known for his ground-breaking reforms in gun-making processes and design, and development of the “American System of Manufacturing.” But Hall’s propensity for change stretches beyond his Rifle Works. The New England native’s other revolutionary contribution to Harpers Ferry: the anti-alcohol Temperance Society.

Hall was president of one of the first organizations in Harpers Ferry to address alcohol abuse and its related unsavory aspects. His advocacy for sobriety offered extraordinary contrast to leadership at the federal armory - at least initially. Hall’s contemporary in the 1820s, Superintendent James Stubblefield, defied Hall and the sister armory in Springfield by declining to enforce a “dry” worksite. Whereas a Springfield armorer would lose his job if found drinking at work, Stubblefield was complicit with consumption, even during working hours. Employee drinking proved profit for Stubblefield: the longest-tenured armory superintendent was partial owner of a nearby distillery, and at least one of his in-laws owned a tavern. Stubblefield had no incentive to encourage abstinence from alcohol, but the resulting culture surely provided ripe inspiration for Temperance advocates like Hall.

As a national trend, Temperance Societies were usually created within church congregations, particularly in industrial areas, and tended to be focused in the North, where religion was becoming more often associated with social reform. Temperance offered an early opportunity for women’s political discourse: the desire to expose perceived dangers of alcohol abuse, such as impoverishment, avoidance of duty to family, and even violence, permitted a rare platform for women to discuss experiences usually cloaked from public view. Unsurprisingly, Temperance Societies thus became early sounding boards for the cause of women’s suffrage. The common ground and constituency of these movements would last into the 20th Century, with the 18th and 19th Amendments (Prohibition and Wom-
Join HFPA’s 50th Anniversary Planning Committee

In 2021, your Association will celebrate its 50th anniversary. That’s 50 years of advocacy and assistance, of a little bookshop with a booming reputation, of fresh programs and annual favorites, and perhaps most importantly, of partners who care passionately for Harpers Ferry. 2021 will be a time to honor accomplishments over the past half-century, and plot a path for the decades to come. As we prepare for this special commemoration, you are invited to make this history with us. Join our 50th Anniversary Planning Committee by contacting cmagi@hfpawv.org.

Upcoming Association Events

To register for these programs, please visit www.harpersferryhistory.org or call 304-535-6881.

Cocktail Workshop Fundraiser
February 16, time TBS, The Barn of Harpers Ferry. Welcome to—or rather, back to—the Roaring Twenties! Step into our speakeasy as we explore (and taste) tales of temperance and the not-so-temperant in Prohibition-era Harpers Ferry and beyond. Participants will get to make and try a number of vintage cocktails popular in the secret barrooms of the 1920s. Do you “know your onions?” We promise you won’t get too zozzled! Cost: $50 per person, or grab your best guy, doll, or pal for a discounted deal of $80 for two people. Must be over 21 and present proof of age at entry.

Puzzle Palooza Fundraiser
March 15, The Barn of Harpers Ferry. Welcome to the game of competitive jigsaw puzzles! Teams of four race to complete a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle. Worried another crew is moving too fast? Slow them down with a hilarious challenge: have them try assembling pieces with oven mitts or another obstacle! Pre-registration is strongly encouraged, to ensure we have sufficient puzzles on hand. Don’t have a team of four? Register by yourself and we’ll match you with other players. Cost: $80 for team of four; $25 per person. Time TBA.

Book a Certified Guide Tour in 2020

Even if you think you know everything you need to know about Harpers Ferry, our certified guides would love to uncover another layer of the story for you. Here are a few reviews from this past year’s tours:

“You should give professional development to the guides at Gettysburg! After the top notch tour we had with you, we were so disappointed.” —April, 2019

“It was a wonderful tour and the guide was outstanding. Would definitely recommend this tour and the guide.”—May, 2019

“Other than being the hottest day ever, we had a wonderful time!! Our guide was very informative!” —July, 2019

“Perfect experience. A guide is the only way to do HF. Fantastc Experience.” —August, 2019

In 2020, our guides will be offering a new Virginius Island tour that will take visitors past the industrial ruins and residential traces of this once thriving island that was decimated by floods. Look for details in the near future. For more information or to book a private, 2.5 hour tour visit harpersferryhistory.org/certified-guide-tours or call 304-535-6881.

The View is published by the Harpers Ferry Park Association (HFPA), an Official National Park Cooperating Association that supports the mission of the National Park Service.

The Association operates the Park Bookshop in Harpers Ferry NHP. Profits from sales are returned to the park to support interpretive and educational programs to enhance your visit.

You are invited to join this unique organization and be a part of Harpers Ferry’s special family. For more information call (304) 535-6881, e-mail us at info@hfpawv.org, or visit our website at www.harpersferryhistory.org.

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Members Turn Out for Annual Meeting and Picnic

Mother Nature cooperated this past September for one of our most well-attended annual membership meetings and picnics. The event was held September 7 at the Stephen T. Mather Training Center and IDC patio.

After board president Jim Silvia welcomed members, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Superintendent Tyrone Brandyburg gave a report on park activities and introduced the new Chief of Interpretation, Scott Pardue. Scott thanked the association for its support of the 75th anniversary events and stated he’s looking forward to growing our partnership.

Member Hugh F. Clayton was recognized as HFPA’s 2019 Volunteer of the Year. Mr. Clayton has been supporting the park and the association for many years, and attends or volunteers nearly every program or event in Harpers Ferry. He was presented with a reproduction 19th century vest to wear while volunteering for the park’s Living History programs. We are truly grateful for all of Mr. Clayton’s support.

After the meeting, members and staff convened on the patio for a delicious potluck lunch. A special treat was a variety of fruit pies from a local bakery, generously donated by Dennis Frye.

Thank you to all members and guests who came out for this wonderful afternoon of good food and shared love for Harpers Ferry!

New Board Members Elected

At the September annual meeting, three members were elected by unanimous vote to serve on the association’s board of directors. We are thrilled to welcome these members to our board and look forward to the experience, energy, and ideas they will bring to the table as we move toward our 50th anniversary.

Laura Clark opened The Outfitter at Harpers Ferry in 1996, and has been an active member of the community here ever since. A Certified Public Accountant, she spent 10 years working in mortgage finance, including three years in audit and analyst positions at Freddie Mac. She subsequently served as a Senior Auditor for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, DC. She has been an active member of the Harpers Ferry Merchants Association and has served on the Harpers Ferry Planning Committee and Board of Appeals. She looks forward to helping the Association manage its finances to maximize our aid to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Chris Craig is a certified park guide in Harpers Ferry and a long-time volunteer for the Sierra Club and the Trail and Town Alliance of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar. He operated Laurel Lodge B&B in his home for 10 years and is a semi-retired school teacher. Last year, Chris was featured as a guide to Harpers Ferry and the C&O Canal in the WGBH production “The Great Ride.”

Sarah Shafer is a US Navy Veteran and the owner and founder of Rations Cafe in Bolivar. She holds graduate degrees in Genetic Engineering and Environmental Education and was formerly a Professor at Lindenwood University outside of St. Louis, MO. She quickly

continued on Page 5
Celebrating Your Accomplishments

Your membership fees are a valuable contribution to the Association’s mission, helping bring unique and meaningful experiences to your national park. Here are some of the programs supported in part by membership revenue in 2019:

2019 Event Guide. It may seem a small and simple matter, but this annual publication listing the year’s special speakers, living history programs, workshops, commemorations, and other major park events is an invaluable tool for visitors and local business owners. Your membership fees help make this essential communication tool a reality - thank you!

Shared Communications Intern. Over the summer of 2019, HFPA and NPS communication staff hosted intern Sadie Gallagher, an electronic media and film major at Towson University. Sadie gained valuable firsthand experience helping advertise and document the 75th Anniversary events, and also produced a promotional video for HFPA. The internship program provides substantial benefits for the student, HFPA, and the park - an opportunity made possible by your membership fees.

Naturalization Ceremony Reception. This past September, 16 new citizens of the United States were duly naturalized at one of the epicenters of American history—Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Individuals from Burma, Canada, Cuba, El Salvador, Germany, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, and Switzerland took their Oaths of Allegiance. Recognizing the contributions immigrants have brought to Harpers Ferry over the centuries, HFPA was pleased to welcome these new American citizens at a special reception held in their honor.

75th Anniversary Speaker Series and Weekend. In addition to the three-day extravaganza celebrating our park’s 75th birthday in June, your membership dollars sponsored several notable speakers at events held throughout 2019. Among these were talks by retired ranger Guinevere Roper and Merrit Roe Smith, a Civil War tour with Kevin Pawlak, a John Brown Raid tour with David Fox, and a fireside chat/overnight experience with the Slave Dwelling Project at the newly acquired Allstadt’s Corner.

Don Redman Jazz Academy and Heritage Awards & Concert. This annual event, held in honor of Storer College alumnus Don Redman, formed Saturday’s entertainment during the 75th Anniversary Weekend. The 2019 concert featured performances by this year’s award recipients, saxophonist Gary Bartz and trumpet player Jon Faddis, as well as the 2019 Don Redman Next Generation Jazz Scholars, high school musicians who attended a jazz academy in Harpers Ferry during the week preceding the concert. The Howard Burns Quartet also performed.

Allstadt Dedication Ceremony. In August, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park acquired Allstadt’s Corner via the assistance of the American Battlefield Trust and others. HFPA was pleased to provide a light reception following the ceremony, celebrating the preservation of this important piece of the John Brown and Civil War stories.

Apple Cider Weekend. This popular historic foodways event demonstrated the delicious tradition of cider-making. Cheers to our members for helping fund this tasty treat!

Olde Tyme Christmas. Another annual favorite, Olde Tyme Christmas transforms Harpers Ferry into a wonderland worthy of Dickensian imagination. HFPA was pleased to participate as an official Victorian gift-wrapping station.

Left to Right: This year’s Naturalization Ceremony occurred on Constitution Day. (Photo by NPS Volunteer Tristan Thomas); In February, as part of the 75th Anniversary Speaker Series, retired Park Ranger Guinevere Roper discussed her decades-long career exploring Harpers Ferry’s African American story. (Photo by Katlyn Simmons); Cider making. (Photo by Katlyn Simmons)
en’s Right to Vote) passing in short succession. No evidence has yet been found linking Hall’s Temperance Society to women’s suffrage; however, Hall’s group did welcome women to attend meetings.

Though generally less popular in the South, social reform-minded religion, at least pertaining to Temperance, would gain a firm foothold in the federal factory town of Harpers Ferry. This might be owing to an influx of skilled workers from outside the immediate environs, or the forced resignation of Stubblefield under mounting allegations of corruption. It might have drawn from simple exposure to the less savory aspects of an industrial village, or Hall’s effective advocacy, or some other factor all together.

Whatever the cause, a cornucopia of groups arose from the many chapels dotting the landscape in the 1830s and 1840s. Hall’s group was hosted by the Harpers Ferry Methodist Meeting House. At its antebellum zenith, St. Peter’s boasted the “Catholic Total Abstinence Society” with some 383 members - that’s more people in one society than currently call Harpers Ferry home today.

As the years wore on and the movement grew, Stubblefield would have been shocked to see crowds of Temperance advocates parading through town—including, on at least one occasion, a formal procession through the arsenal grounds!

Intrigued by this tale? Join us on February 16th for our Shenandoah Speakeasy fundraiser! We’ll explore Prohibition-era Harpers Ferry and try our hand at mixing popular drinks of the day. See page 2 for more information.

New Board Members Elected, continued from page 3

became enamored with the history, nature, and social contributions that Harpers Ferry offered when she moved here. She has found ways for her family (husband and twins) to support the park in various avenues through volunteering and membership.

Incumbents Ed Wheeless and Cynthia Gayton were re-elected to serve another three-year term. Following adjournment of the membership meeting, the new board convened to elect the following officers: James Beckman, President; Cynthia Gayton, Vice President; Laura Clark, Treasurer; and David Gilbert, Secretary.

If you are a park advocate and interested in a future position on our board, please contact HFPA Executive Director Cathy Baldau at 304-535-2078.

Connect with us on Social Media!

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Recent Donations:
Dennis Frye
Ron Gaskins, Mountaineer
Photo Excursions
Jacob Huang
Donna Mattson (Lockwood House donation)
Rea Andrew Redd
Bruce Rice

Armory Superintendent Members:
Gregory DiCostanzo & Gillian McPhee
Harpers Ferry, WV
Kerry and Mike Duffy
Potomac Falls, VA
Suzanne & Jim Silvia
Taunton, MA and Harpers Ferry, WV
Ed Wheeless & Chris Craig
Harpers Ferry, WV

Paymaster Members:
Mike Hegarty/Our Lady of Sorrows School
Farmington, MI
John H. Madigan, Jr.
Harpers Ferry, WV
Cynthia K. Mason
Baltimore, MD
Sarah Shafer & Don Jimeno/Rations Cafe
Bolivar, WV

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Lysbeth Bainbridge
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Support Harpers Ferry National Historical Park!

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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