

Published for the  
Members and Friends  
of the Harpers Ferry  
Historical Association

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# The Flood of 1996

The worst flooding in more than a decade in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle caused widespread damage along the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers on Saturday and Sunday, January 20-21, 1996. Heavy rainfall, coupled with melting snow from the Blizzard of 1996 — which dropped more than two feet of snow earlier in the month — caused streams and rivers to quickly rise and jump their banks.

In Lower Town Harpers Ferry — the heart of the park's historic district — rapidly rising waters forced an emergency call to some 100 park employees at 1:00 a.m. Saturday morning. Park Rangers, administrative personnel, maintenance workers, curatorial staff, and volunteers worked for more than eight hours moving threatened artifacts and exhibits to higher ground. By 7:00 a.m., floodwaters submerged the floor of the Park Bookshop and Information Center on Shenandoah Street. Other flooded exhibits included the Blacksmith Shop, Industry Museum, Restoration Museum, Wetlands Exhibit, John Brown

Museum, and John Brown's Fort. Package 116, which includes four park buildings currently under restoration along Shenandoah Street, was also flooded. The rivers crested at 29.4 feet late Saturday night. By comparison, the record Flood of 1936 crested at 36.5 feet in Lower Town Harpers Ferry.

The Lower Town Historic District re-opened on Monday, Jan. 29th. As buildings are repaired and rehabilitated, park exhibits are slowly reopening. Presently, John Brown's Fort, the Civil War Museum, Black Voices Museum, Restoration Museum, Burton Jewelry Shop Exhibit, Dry Goods Store Exhibit, Wetlands Exhibit, and National Park Bookshop are open to park visitors.

Donations of money, supplies, and services are being accepted to help with the repair of flood-damaged buildings, trails, and park resources. Please send your donations, payable to National Park Service, to: Park Restoration Fund, Harpers Ferry NHP, P.O. Box 65, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425. To inquire about donating supplies or services, please call the park administrative offices at (304) 535-6223.



Above: floodwaters advance up Shenandoah Street on Saturday morning, January 20. Left: when the rivers subsided, mud and debris covered much of the Lower Town. (Photos by Dave Gilbert).



The picture which appears on our newsletter's nameplate, dating from 1803, is one of the oldest prints of Harpers Ferry. Twenty years earlier, in 1783, Thomas Jefferson had declared that this view was "worth a voyage across the Atlantic."

# 25th Annual Meeting Features Bill Everhart and Kip Stowell

Members and friends of the Harpers Ferry Historical Association are invited to our 25th Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, April 13. This meeting will feature a morning flood tour of Virginius Island, a luncheon at the Anvil Restaurant, and a special afternoon event we call "Looking Back, Looking Ahead" — a 25th Anniversary panel discussion of association history, our relationship with the National Park Service, and a glimpse at our promising future. This panel presentation will be held at the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church on Jackson Street in Harpers Ferry.

The 25th Anniversary panel will be comprised of park service and association people instrumental in forming and guiding the association during the past 25 years. Panelists will include Bill Everhart, former Director of Harpers Ferry Center and a founding association board member; Kip Stowell, who helped design the park's first bookshop and now serves as Mayor of Harpers Ferry; Carl Degen, former chief of the Audio-Visual Division at Harpers Ferry Center; and Deborah Piscitelli, the association's present Executive Director. In addition to asking panelists for their personal observations and recollections,

board president and panel moderator Doug Perks will take questions from the audience.

The Virginius Island flood tour Saturday morning will be led by Park Ranger John Powell and association staff member Dave Gilbert, author of *A Walker's Guide to Harpers Ferry*. In addition to viewing the considerable damage wrought by the recent Flood of 1996, the tour guides will recall dramatic stories from the floods of 1870, 1889, 1924, and 1936 which so devastated Virginius Island. Evidence of waterpower and industry will also be explored. Meet at the park shuttle bus shelter in Lower Town Harpers Ferry. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and be prepared for possible muddy trail conditions. The tour is limited to 30 people.

The noon luncheon will be held at The Anvil Restaurant in Bolivar. Menu selections and prices are included on the enclosed **Annual Meeting Registration Form**. The association's regular business meeting will follow the afternoon panel presentation at the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church.

Please join us on Saturday, April 13. Come for the whole day, or just for the event that interests you. Please fill out the enclosed **Annual Meeting Registration Form** and either mail it or fax it to us by Wednesday, April 10. We look forward to seeing you.

## Meeting at a Glance Saturday, April 13

10:00-11:30 a.m.  
Virginius Island Flood Walk

Noon-1:00 p.m.  
Luncheon at The Anvil

1:30-2:30 p.m.  
"Looking Back, Looking Ahead" – a panel discussion

2:30-3:30 p.m.  
Association business meeting

## Harpers Ferry Home Page Honored

The Harpers Ferry NHP Virtual Visitor Center was recently named to the "Top 5% of the Web" by Point Communications. Point, a free service which rates and reviews only the best, sharpest, and most interesting home pages on the World Wide Web, writes that the Harpers Ferry site "gives a deft and colorful overview of the area's history and attractions." The Harpers Ferry home page received very high marks for both content and presentation. The Harpers Ferry Virtual Visitor Center is jointly maintained by the National Park Service and Harpers Ferry Historical Association.

## Weather & Federal Shutdown Impact Association

The combined effect of two Federal shutdowns, the Blizzard of 1996, and the Flood of 1996 have wreaked havoc on the Harpers Ferry Historical Association. With its park bookshop forced to close for a total of 37 days in November, December, and January, the association estimates losses in excess of \$23,000. A decline in sales from last year—as much as \$15,000 for February and March—is also anticipated as a result of moving to smaller temporary bookshop quarters on High Street.



# Niagara Movement Anniversary to be Remembered



Harpers Ferry National Historical Park invites you to join us in marking the 90th anniversary of the Niagara Movement's 1906 Conference in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. To commemorate this anniversary, Harpers Ferry Park is planning a special weekend celebration August 24-25, 1996. This weekend event will feature guest speakers, including Dr. David Du Bois, son of W.E.B. Du Bois; Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Chairman, Department of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University; musical

entertainment; and a pilgrimage honoring the original members of the Niagara Movement.

The Niagara Movement was one of the nation's earliest civil rights organizations. By the end of the 19th century, the promise of freedom and equality for blacks had been buried by Jim Crow laws and legal segregation. To combat these injustices, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and other leading African-Americans created the Niagara Movement, which first met at Niagara Falls in 1905.

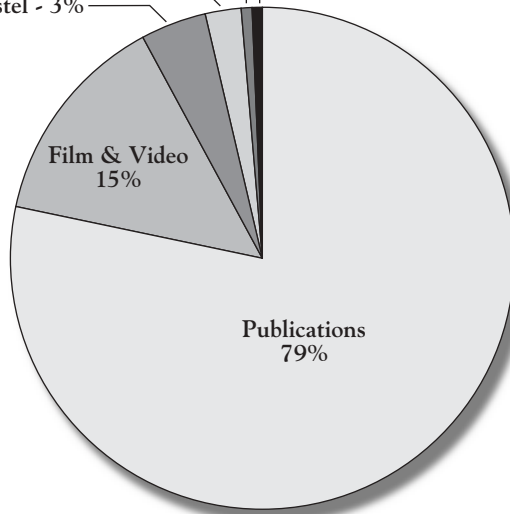
## 1995 Financial Report

Harpers Ferry Historical Association

Income	1995	1994
Publications	\$376,957	\$357,540
Film & Video	71,869	63,879
50th Anniversary	8,271	21,589
Elderhostel	14,175	14,650
Membership & Donations	1,297	4,025
Other Income	1,993	1,843
	<b>\$474,562</b>	<b>\$463,526</b>

### Income

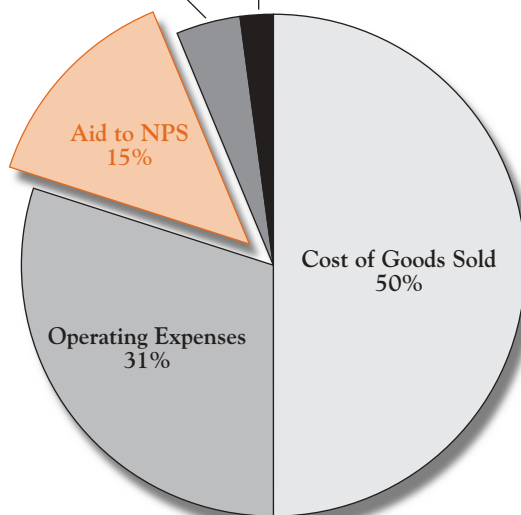
Membership & Donations - .5%  
 Other Income - .5%  
 50th Anniversary - 1.5%  
 Elderhostel - 3%



Expense	1995	1994
Cost of Goods Sold	\$237,574	\$225,641
Operating Expense	147,539	135,493
Aid to NPS	71,668	71,034
Elderhostel	12,887	12,906
Revenue in Excess of Expense	4,894	18,452
	<b>\$474,562</b>	<b>\$463,526</b>

### Expense

Revenue in Excess of Expense - 1%  
 Elderhostel - 3%



### Aid to National Park Service

Interpretive & Educational Services	\$28,482
Personnel Assistance	40,827
Free Publications	1,191
Other Aid	1,168
	<b>\$71,668</b>

## 1996 Calendar of Events

April 13 – Harpers Ferry Historical Association 25th Annual Meeting

April 20 – Earth Day

May 25-26 – Industry & Transportation Expo

June 7 – Association Fundraiser: “An Evening with the President”

June 29 – In the Land of the Free: A 19th century July 4th Celebration

August 24-25 – 90th Anniversary of the Niagara Movement

October 12 – Election Day, 1860

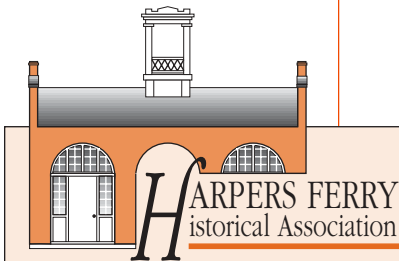
December 7-8 – Keeping Christmas

The Harpers Ferry Historical Association operates the National Park Bookshop in Lower Town Harpers Ferry. 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 or send e-mail to: [dgilbert@intrepid.net](mailto:dgilbert@intrepid.net)

**Harpers Ferry Historical Association**  
Post Office Box 197  
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

Non-Profit Organization  
Bulk Rate  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 12  
Harpers Ferry, WV  
25425



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## Fundraiser Features "Dinner with the President"

On Friday evening, June 7th, the Harpers Ferry Historical Association will hold its first ever fundraising dinner. This outdoor evening event will take place between 6:00-8:00 p.m on the grounds of the Mather Training Center on Camp Hill in Harpers Ferry. A catered dinner will be served, and entertainment will feature Jim Getty in his incomparable role as Abraham Lincoln.

This fundraiser marks the 25th Anniversary of the Harpers Ferry Historical Association. Since 1971, the association has donated almost \$350,000 in aid to Harpers

Ferry National Historical Park. But due to the recent federal shutdown, Blizzard of 1996, and Flood of 1996, the association's support of the park's interpretive and educational programs now needs your help as well. Tickets for the June 7th event will be \$50 per person, \$80 per couple, and \$25 per child 12 and under.

Mr. Getty has been re-creating his portrayal of "Mr. Lincoln" since 1977. He has presented programs for the Library of Congress, Smithsonian Institution, and the Close Up Foundation. His first-person presentation and participant interaction has entertained schools, colleges, conventions, and special events from coast to coast. Mr. Getty is a member of the National Speakers Association and The International Platform Association.

Look for your invitation to this 25th Anniversary event in the next few weeks. If you're not presently on our mailing list, or if you have questions about this upcoming fundraising event, please call us at (304) 535-6881 or contact us by e-mail at [dgilbert@intrepid.net](mailto:dgilbert@intrepid.net). We hope you can join us on June 7th!



- I want to join the Harpers Ferry Historical Association.**  
**My \$5 membership fee is enclosed (valid Jan. 1 to Dec. 31).**  
Your membership helps support the Association's efforts to enrich the educational experience offered at Harpers Ferry Park. Your membership also entitles you to a 15% discount on all items sold at our bookshop.
- I'm already a member; please note my new address below.**  
By notifying us of your change of address, you'll continue to receive this newsletter and learn about upcoming Park Service and Association events.
- Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_
- Please clip and mail to:** Harpers Ferry Historical Association  
P.O. Box 197 ■ Harpers Ferry, WV 25425