

Published for the  
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Historical Association

Summer 2006



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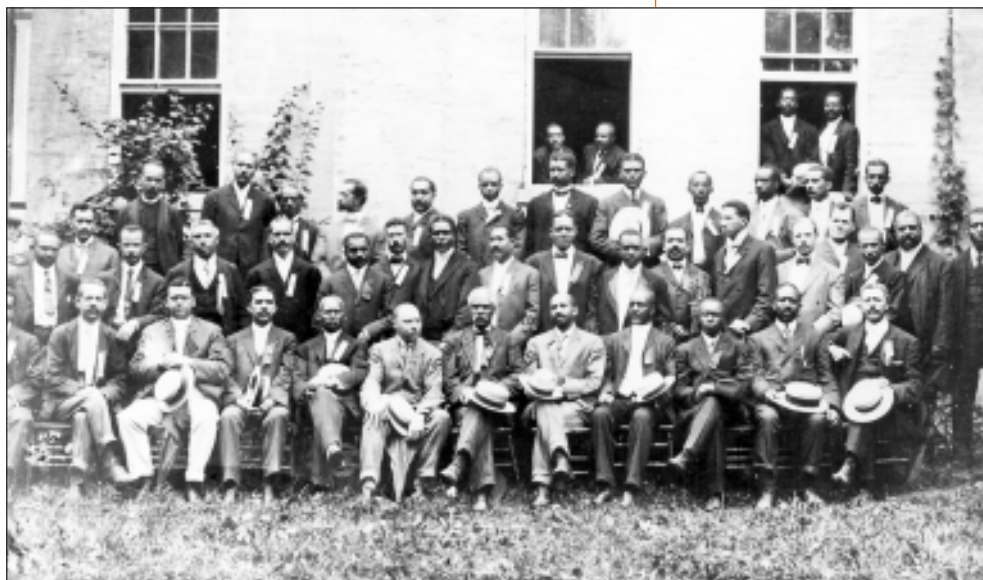
# 1906 - 2006

## The Niagara Movement Commemoration at Harpers Ferry

### The History

In August 1906, a momentous event took place on the Storer College Campus in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Little-known and not frequently mentioned in history books, this event and its significance reached far into the new century to lay the groundwork for the formation of the NAACP and the Civil Rights Movement. The Niagara Convention held its first public meeting in the United States on August 15 - 19, 1906 on the campus of Storer College. This August, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park will commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic meeting with a week of activities of celebration, inspiration and remembrance. This event is being hosted by Harpers Ferry NHP and co-sponsored by the Jefferson County Branch of the NAACP and the Harpers Ferry Historical Association.

With failed Reconstruction, the Supreme Court's separate but equal doctrine, and Booker T. Washington's accommodationist policies, the outlook for full civil rights for African Americans was bleak at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1905 W. E. B. Du Bois drafted a call for "organized determination and aggressive action on the part of men who believed in Negro freedom and growth." He gathered together a group of men with the hope of meeting in Buffalo, New York. When refused hotel rooms, they migrated across the border to Canada and the 29 men met at the Erie Beach Hotel in Ontario. These first



Niagarites adopted a constitution and by-laws, established committees, and wrote the "Declaration of Principles" outlining the future for African Americans. They planned for annual conferences in locations that had significance to the freedom struggle.

Thirteen months later, they chose Harpers Ferry as their meeting place. Because of its scenic beauty, and because John Brown had become a symbol of freedom after his 1859 raid on the U.S. Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, it was an ideal place to meet. Storer College, for 25 years the only school in West Virginia that offered African Americans an education beyond the primary level, provided a perfect setting.

Among the goals of the movement were freedom of speech and suffrage; they wanted improved educational facilities, and integra-

*continued on page 2*

*Delegates to the Second  
Niagara Movement  
Conference pose in front of  
Anthony Hall on the Storer  
College campus on August 17,  
1906 (Harpers Ferry National  
Historical Park).*

*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."*

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## Niagara Centennial Donations:

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Stephen T. Mather Training Center, Harpers Ferry, WV  
Allan Spears  
National Parks Conservation Assn., Washington, DC

*continued on opposite page*

## Niagara Commemoration

### Continued from Page 1

tion of all public facilities. They demanded that the Constitution be enforced equally and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments be observed.

The Niagrites arrived in Harpers Ferry with passion in their hearts and high hopes that their voices would be heard and action would result. Following the Harpers Ferry conference, the Niagara Movement held three more meetings. Local chapters in larger cities continued fighting segregation. Ultimately, as the first African-American group to protest racial oppression, the Niagara Movement paved the way for stronger groups to carry on.

## The Event

**Teacher Institute** - The centennial event will begin on Monday, August 14 with a Teacher Institute designed to instruct educators in the use of the newly-developed Niagara Educator's Guide. A significant and lasting feature of the commemoration, the curriculum guide is designed for use with

grades K - 12. Two thousand copies will be distributed to local, state, tri-state and urban schools. The guide is in CD Rom format with an instructional booklet. It consists of background information, lesson plans and activities for weeklong study, and conforms to state and national standards of learning. This guide has been funded in part by the West Virginia Humanities Council and a National Park Service Parks as Classroom grant.

**Academic Symposium** - The Academic Symposium is scheduled to begin Wednesday, August 16 at 9:00 a.m. and run until Friday, August 18 at 12:30 p.m. The symposium will be held in the same buildings that hosted the Niagara Movement 100 years ago. Fourteen papers representing original research about the Niagara Movement, the men and women involved and the legacy of the movement will be presented.

Dr. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Harvard University, will speak Thursday morning. Dr. Higginbotham's research and

*continued on next page*

## Papers Being Presented at the Academic Symposium

- Scot French, The Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies, "John Brown's Place in Niagara Movement Iconography"
- Ron Armstead, Executive Director, Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust, "The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Connecting African Americans and Civil War History"
- Dr. Shawn Alexander, Yale University, "It is Strike NOW or NEVER": The Afro-American Council and the Origins of the Niagara Movement"
- Dr. David F. Godshalk, Shippensburg University, "Voicing Black Manliness: Georgia's 'New Negro Men' and the Niagara Movement"
- Dr. Blair L.M. Kelley, North Carolina State University, "Appeal to the Masses: The Niagara Movement and the Popular Efforts to Halt Segregation"
- Connie Park Rice, West Virginia University, "Pioneer Women: The 'Ladies' of the Niagara Movement"
- Kami Fletcher, Texas Woman's University, "The Invitation Was Lost in the Mail"
- John H. Spiers, III, Clemson University, "The Burden of Black Women: The Gendered Leadership of W. E. B. Du Bois during the Niagara Movement"
- Connie Park Rice, West Virginia University, "J. R. Clifford, His Life and Legacy"
- Thomas Rodd, Esq. and Justice Larry V. Starcher, West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, "John Robert Clifford of West Virginia—A Niagara Pioneer Speaks to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"
- Anita Lambert, Great-granddaughter of Freeman H. M. Murray, one of the Niagara organizers, "Freeman H. M. Murray"
- Barbara Nevergold, University of Buffalo, "From Pan Am Protests to the Niagara Movement: The Buffalo Connection"
- Dr. Robert W. Williams, Bennett College, "Politics, Rights and Spatiality in W. E. B. Du Bois' 1906 'Address to the Country'"
- Dr. Mark A. Thomas, La Salle University, "From Plessy to Brown and Beyond: The Niagara Movement's Impact on Value Transformation in Supreme Court Decisions"





The "World Famous Count Basie Orchestra" performs on Saturday evening, August 19, at 7:00 p.m. and features an original score commissioned especially for the Niagara Centennial.

writing focuses on African American women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She is the author of *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church: 1880 - 1920* and co-editor of *African American Lives*. Dr. David Levering Lewis, a distinguished Du Bois scholar, will deliver the final remarks at the symposium. Dr. Lewis has twice been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his two-volume biography of Niagara founder W.E.B. Du Bois.

Attendees will also be treated to the re-enactment of "J. R. Clifford and the Carrie Williams Case" on Thursday afternoon at 4:00 p.m., and to a reception at the Park Bookshop during a free Thursday evening in the Lower Town.

## Weekend Main Event

### Friday, August 18

The public weekend event kicks off with tents opening on the campus Friday at 5:00 p.m. and an opening reception sponsored by the National Parks Conservation Association. Music by Howard Burns at 5:30 will be followed by the official opening ceremony and a half-hour performance by the Shiloh Gospel Choir. Beginning at 8:00 p.m. Donzaleigh Abernathy, daughter of late civil rights leader, Rev. Ralph David Abernathy will offer a dramatic presentation, "Women of Niagara." The evening will conclude with Dr. Michael White's New Orleans Jazz Ensemble performance "African American Music in the Age of Niagara."

### Saturday, August 19

Tents open at 10:00 a.m. Saturday morning. Programming begins at 11:00 a.m. with a

welcome and keynote address by Dr. David Levering Lewis, Professor of History at NYU and two-time Pulitzer Prize winning author of *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*. His address will be followed by the "Cornerstone Program: A Battle for All Americans" presented by young people.

At 12:30 p.m. actor Fred Morsell will perform "Reverdy C. Ransom and the Spirit of John Brown," in a first-person portrayal. The audience then may enjoy an hour-long gospel concert by the spiritual pioneers of song, "The Dixie Hummingbirds." Also at 1:30 Dr. Peggy Brooks-Bertram will give a talk on Rev. John William Dundy at Curtis Freewill Baptist Church. Dundy was a great fundraiser for Storer College.

The highlight of the remainder of the afternoon will be an insightful panel discussion "*The Problem of the Twentieth Century will be the Problem of the Color Line: Breaking Barriers in America*," featuring famous African American "barrier breakers" sharing their stories. Dr. Lewis will moderate the panel.

Participating will be *Juanita Abernathy*, widow of civil rights leader Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, *Rev. Walter Fauntroy*, civil rights pioneer and first District of Columbia Delegate to the U. S. House of Representatives.

*Dr. Eddie Henderson*, the first African American to compete in the National Figure Skating Championship; *Monte Irvin*, a pioneer in breaking the color barrier in major league baseball and member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame; and *Cheryl White*, first African American female professional jockey represent barrier breakers from the world of sports.

*continued on next page*

## Niagara Centennial Donations (cont'd):

The Park Foundation  
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## Blues Concert Silent Auction Contributors

*We thank the following Harpers Ferry businesses for their donations:*

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*Also donating:*

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*continued on opposite page*

**Niagara Commemoration  
Continued from Page 3**

*Joseph Wilder*, barrier breaking musician on Broadway and Don Redman Heritage award recipient, currently round out this distinguished panel.

A reception to honor these men and women, and a book and CD signing will begin immediately following the discussion. Additional authors participating in the event will join the panel to personalize books and greet visitors.

From 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Dr. MaryNell Morgan of Empire State College, New York will present a program entitled "Sorrow Songs, Protest Songs and the Souls of Black Folk" at Curtis Freewill Baptist Church.

**Saturday Evening Music  
& the Niagara Suite**

The remainder of the evening is devoted to music by the *World Famous Count Basie Orchestra* directed by William H. Hughes. This entertainment, beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the Storer College Campus, will feature an original score commissioned especially for the Niagara Centennial. It will be conducted by its composer, Dr. Frank Foster.

Foster's three-part piece depicts many important aspects of the struggle for civil rights in America. The opening movement entitled "The Spirit of John Brown" paints a picture of the sordid conditions of bondage and the famous raid that campaigned to end slavery. In "Conference Time," the second movement of the suite, listeners will hear the resolve, jubilation, and anticipation of better times ahead as the dedicated Niagara group forges a new direction to ensure equality for all. The final movement will be "The Battle We Wage." Don't miss this passionate and unique tribute to the Niagara Movement.

Also Saturday evening, from 8:00 - 10:00 p.m., the famous Preservation Hall Jazz Band will perform on Bolivar Heights.

**Sunday, August 20**

The final day of the event will begin early and mirror a moving experience that took place at the 1906 meeting. On Sunday in that year as part of a day devoted to honoring the memory of John Brown, a silent pilgrimage led by Brooklyn physician Owen Waller was made to John Brown's fort,

located on the Murphy farm near the Shenandoah River. The Niagarites removed their shoes and socks as they tread upon "hallowed ground" at the fort site. After personal recollections of John Brown by Richard T. Greener, Harvard's first African-American graduate, the group then marched single-file around the fort singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "John Brown's Body." The day ended with a stirring oration by Reverdy C. Ransom. Du Bois later wrote that Ransom's speech "led through its inspiration and eloquence to the eventual founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

This event will be re-enacted and everyone who wishes to participate should assemble at the Cavalier Heights Visitor Center between 6:00 - 6:45 a.m. for transport to the Murphy Farm. The participants may enjoy a coffee reception 6:00 - 7:15 a.m. sponsored by the Town of Harpers Ferry on the farm as they gather for the walk. The pilgrimage to the fort site will begin at 7:30 a.m.

Programming will then move back to the Storer College Campus for a Memorial Service, followed by a concert "Songs of Freedom & Inspiration" by Odetta.

The 1906 conference concluded with the reading of the "Address to the Country" penned by W. E. B. Du Bois:

*We will not be satisfied to take one jot or  
tittle less than our full manhood rights.  
We claim for ourselves every single right  
that belongs to a freeborn American,  
political, civil and social and until we get  
these rights we will never cease to protest  
and assail the ears of America. The  
battle we wage is not for ourselves alone  
but for all true Americans.*

During the afternoon of the commemoration, speakers including Dr. Lewis and Dr. Du Bois Irvin, granddaughter of W. E. B. Du Bois will deliver "Reflections of W. E. B. Du Bois," focusing on his personal life. Dr. Lawrence Hogan, Professor of History at Union County College will moderate.

There will be a closing concert from 2:45 - 4:00 p.m. by the Delfeayo Marsalis Quintet. The day will conclude with the presentation of the Niagara Centennial

Plaque to be placed in Mather Training Center, and the traditional group photo on the campus lawn. Copies of this photo may be pre-ordered at the Sales Tent.

### Youth Discovery Tent

Running concurrently with other activities will be the fun-filled Youth Discovery Tent, where young and young-at-heart may participate in hands-on activities such as the “Freedom Quilt” or “Freedom House” projects. Learn about the men and women of Niagara and their fight for freedom. Fred Morsell will talk about how the men of Niagara changed our lives.

Musical programs include a performance by Magpie and a presentation of “The Evolution of Music at the Time of the Niagara Movement” by Dr. Michael White. There will also be a theatrical musical production “I Am One, Send Me!” about the Life of “Miss Jennie,” Jane Serepta Dean.

### Other Concurrent Activities

There will be something for everyone throughout the weekend. View the The “Great Blacks in Wax” exhibit or the Du Bois Documentary in Mather Training Center while escaping from the heat. Visit the Harpers Ferry Historical Sales Tent on the lawn to get your commemorative pins and ribbons, Niagara medallions, commemorative print, or a book to give you a better understanding of history during the early part of the century. Stop by the Post Office kiosk (Saturday only 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.) to have a cachet or your program officially cancelled. Food and beverages will be available on the plaza close to all events for your convenience. Don’t miss the opportunity to join in this special weekend at Harpers Ferry Park. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

*Front and back sides of Niagara Centennial medallion, produced exclusively for the 2006 commemoration.*



*Kids build a “freedom house,” one of many activities that will take place at the Youth Discovery Tent.*

### Niagara Sponsors and Contributors

The Niagara Centennial Committee and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park thank all those who have contributed funding, time and talent to the planning, preparation and presentation of this event. Contributors and those donating to the Silent Auction at the Blues Concert are listed in the side margins of this newsletter. The Association thanks the Jefferson County Branch of the NAACP who organized and supported the Annual Blues Concert for the last ten years, and Midge Flinn Yost for organizing this year’s Blues Concert Silent Auction, and creating the promotional video about Niagara.

We are still currently accepting donations and sponsorships for this event. For more information, please call Debbie Piscitelli at 304-535-2078.

**Note: The above schedule and information is subject to change. Check the official Niagara website at [www.nps.gov/hafe/niagara](http://www.nps.gov/hafe/niagara) and your event program for exact times. Please park at the Cavalier Heights Visitor Center for transportation to all Niagara Commemoration events.**

### Current Master Armors (cont’d):

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*Thanks to all members who have supported us so generously throughout the year.*





# 2006 Schedule of Events



Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) students help park staff provide living history interpretation in Lower Town Harpers Ferry.

**July 22-23 – I Will Follow Them To the Death: Sheridan’s Soldiers 1864** – Presents Harpers Ferry as the staging area for Union General Philip Sheridan’s Shenandoah Campaign. Members of the reactivated living history group 11th New Jersey will demonstrate Union army garrison duties such as guard mount parade; searching and arresting spies, deserters, and traitors; processing prisoners of war; searching citizens; and maintaining military security in an occupied enemy town.

**July 29 – Bill Barker as Thomas Jefferson** “This Scene is Worth a Voyage Across the Atlantic” (1:00 p.m. – Lower Town). “The Object of Your Mission: Thomas Jefferson and the Lewis and Clark Expedition” (3:00 p.m. – Lower Town).

## AUGUST

**August 18-20 – Niagara Centennial Commemoration** – Join the centennial celebration of the Niagara Movement, the cornerstone of the modern civil rights era. *See this newsletter for details.*

**August 26-27 – Rally For Virginia 1861: From Citizens to Soldiers** – Presents the Southern Grays as a camp of mustering Virginia State Troops during the beginning of the Civil War when citizens became soldiers and state militia became part of the Confederate army. The living history group

will portray the Grayson “Daredevils,” an 1861 militia unit from the mountains of southwestern Virginia. This militia became part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia infantry and served under Col. Thomas Jackson, later known as “Stonewall.” The group will display raw recruits of the time with period uniforms, weapons, and camp life for park visitors.

## SEPTEMBER

**September 2 – U. S. Marine Band** – “Free Country” will perform at the Cavalier Heights Visitor Center from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Free of charge.

**September 30 – Hike Harpers Ferry/ National Public Lands Day.**

## OCTOBER

**October 7 – John Brown’s Legacy: Beyond the Gallows** – Special programs will feature the U.S. Marines who captured Brown, militia drill, ladies fair booth in support of the local militia, a northern reaction anti-slavery musical performance, a political rally, and tribute to the former mayor killed in the raid. Diverse views on Brown’s actions and his legacy will be shared with the audience.

**October 14 – Mr. Lincoln Returns to Harpers Ferry** – With Jim Getty as Abraham Lincoln (1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Lower Town).

**October 21-22 – Family Life 1860 in Harpers Ferry: The Frederick Roeder Story** – Help the living history staff and volunteers crush, shred, and squeeze apple cider at Roeder’s Tavern while hearing about the family’s life and times. Each day a special talk and cider making demonstration will be presented. Learn about Frederick Roeder, a German immigrant and prosperous merchant and what effect the political turmoil of 1860 played in his life.

**October 28-29 – The Eyes of the Army: The Cavalry** – Living History volunteers Company H, Second U.S. Cavalry, will demonstrate cavalry riding, weapons firing,



sabre drill, and bugling. On Saturday and Sunday, the group will join the ranger-guided tour for a historic weapons firing demonstration. The setting for this story is the September 1862 Siege of Harpers Ferry.

## NOVEMBER

**November 4-5 – Under Fire: The Battle of Harpers Ferry 1862** – Interprets the Battle of Harpers Ferry and surrender of the Union garrison to General Stonewall Jackson. Artillery firing demonstrations are scheduled to recall the power of the Confederate artillery that sealed the fate of the Union soldiers in 1862. Members of Baltimore Light Artillery, Fredericksburg Light Artillery and the Liberty Rifles will portray

Confederate artillery soldiers. A military camp will be open for visitation on the Bolivar Heights Battlefield.

## DECEMBER

**December 2-3 – Prospects of Peace: A Soldier’s Prayer** – Presents a special program on Yuletide 1864 when Harpers Ferry soldiers attempted to create their own version of Christmas. Programs and activities will feature local citizens and soldiers preparing for the Yuletide, a Civil War style Santa Claus dispersing presents to the soldiers, a Victorian Cotillion, Yuletide confections, and special guided walking tours.

### Harpers Ferry Websites

Harpers Ferry Historical Association  
[www.HarpersFerryHistory.org](http://www.HarpersFerryHistory.org)

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park  
[www.nps.gov/hafe](http://www.nps.gov/hafe)

### Harpers Ferry Historical Association Membership Application

- I wish to join the Harpers Ferry Historical 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 household. Benefits include a newsletter subscription, a 15% discount on all bookshop purchases, a vinyl decal, and invitations to annual meeting and events.
- \$25 Sarah Jane Foster** – An alternative basic membership for educators. Benefits include the above plus open house for teachers and discounts on programs for teachers.
- \$45 Millwright** – For those members who are frequent visitors to the park. Benefits are the same as Armory Worker category plus a 12-month Harpers Ferry Park entrance pass.
- \$100 Master Armorer** – A supporting membership category. Includes all benefits of the Millwright category plus a “My Home Towne” replica of Anthony Memorial Hall, member recognition in our newsletter and at our annual meeting, and a special tour.
- \$250 Paymaster** – For businesses, vendors or family donors who wish to contribute to the Association’s mission. Benefits include 15% discount on all bookshop purchases; a newsletter subscription; vinyl decal; invitations to annual meetings, events, and association-sponsored education programs; a 12-month park pass; “My Home Towne” replica; recognition in newsletter and at annual meeting; special tour; and additional membership card.
- \$500 Armory Superintendent** – For supporters (individual and corporate) who wish to perpetuate Association and Park education programs. Benefits include 15% discount on all bookshop purchases, a newsletter subscription, vinyl decals, invitations to annual meeting, events, and education programs, “My Home Towne” replica, recognition in the newsletter and at annual meeting, special tour, a National Park pass (for use in all parks) for individuals, and a display plaque for businesses.

- 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 Historical Association.

- I am a Charter Member and would like to make a donation of \_\_\_\_\_.

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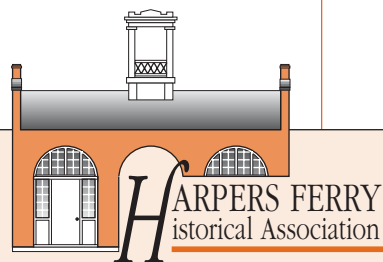
The Harpers Ferry Historical Association operates the National Park Bookshop in Lower Town Harpers Ferry. Profits from sales are returned to the park to support interpretive and educational programs to enhance your visit.

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: [hfha@earthlink.net](mailto:hfha@earthlink.net)

## Harpers Ferry Historical Association

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## The Bookshop Returns

For those of you who may have visited us in our temporary location, you will be happy to know we returned to our spacious shop on Shenandoah Street at the end of March. We thank all of you who supported us during our stay in small quarters. Please visit us soon, if you haven't already. We have a new ceiling and new lighting, and fresh paint in a lovely new color. You won't notice it, but we also now have fire suppression, and a large steel beam spanning our ceiling and supporting our inventory on the second floor. A bathroom for those with disabilities



has also been added between the Bookshop and the original restrooms. By fall we will have our "historic" heating and air conditioning replaced.

Thanks to all the maintenance staff who helped us throughout the move, and to park staff at the Visitor Center who worked hard to supplement our sales during the winter. We are very grateful for all that they did to help.

## Volunteers Needed for August Event

The Association is looking for volunteers to help sell books, move inventory, help with book signings and receptions, and to sell sodas and snacks during the Niagara event, August 14 - 20. If you have any days available you would like to help us, we will be most grateful. Please call us at 304-535-6881 or email [dkpiscitelli@earthlink.net](mailto:dkpiscitelli@earthlink.net). Scheduling for volunteers is beginning now.

The Park is also recruiting volunteers to help with a wider array of tasks during the event. To volunteer, call VIP coordinator David Fox at 304-535-6282 or email [david\\_fox@nps.gov](mailto:david_fox@nps.gov).