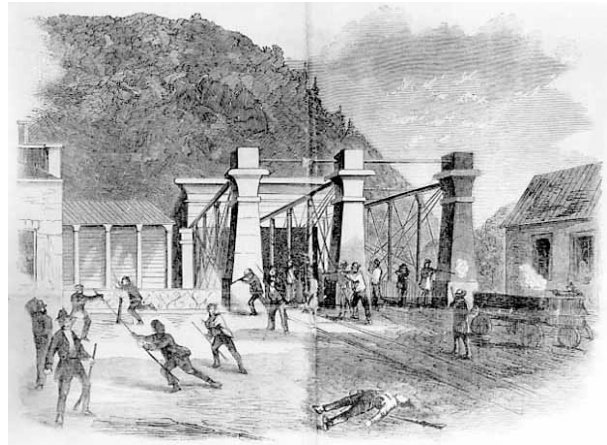


# Raid on Harpers Ferry

## John Brown's Last Actions

John Brown came to Harpers Ferry, Virginia in July of 1859 to continue his crusade to end slavery. The town was home to a federal arsenal that held over 100,000 weapons- Brown's plan was to seize this arsenal and use the weapons to help free the slaves throughout the south.

Though some of his followers left after learning of his plan (Frederick Douglass advised Brown that it was a grave mistake and that he "will never make it out alive."), Brown forged ahead. On October 16, Brown set out for Harpers Ferry with 21 men -- 5 blacks, including Dangerfield Newby, who hoped to rescue his wife who was still a slave, and 16 whites, two of whom were Brown's sons. Leaving after sundown, the men crossed the Potomac, then walked all night in heavy rain, reaching the town at 4am. They cut telegraph wires, then made their assault. First they captured the federal armory and arsenal. They then captured Hall's Rifle Works, a supplier of weapons to the government. Brown and his men rounded up 60 prominent citizens of the town and held them as hostages, hoping that their slaves would join the fight. No slaves came forth.



The local militia pinned Brown and his men down. Under a white flag, one of Brown's sons was sent out to negotiate with the citizens. He was shot and killed. News of the insurrection, quickly reached President Buchanan. Marines and soldiers were dispatched, under the leadership of Colonel Robert E. Lee. By the time they arrived, eight of Brown's 22-man army had already been killed. Lee's men moved in and quickly ended the insurrection. In the end, ten of Brown's men were killed (including two blacks and both of his sons), seven were captured (two of these later), and five had escaped.



Brown, who was seriously wounded, was taken to Charlestown, Virginia (now Charles Town, West Virginia), along with the other captives. There they were quickly tried and sentenced. On December 2, 1859, John Brown was hanged.

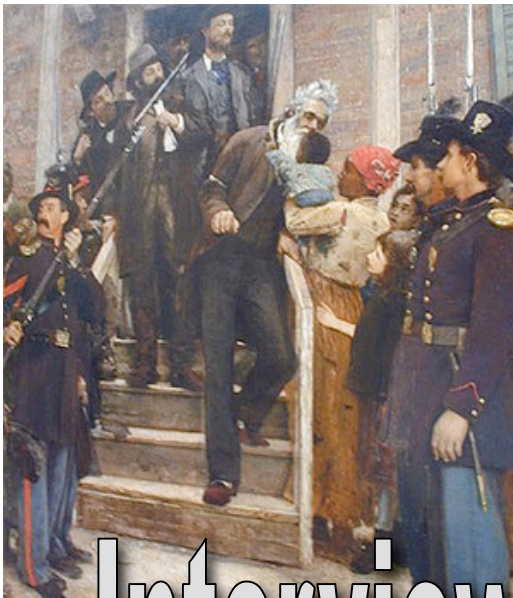
# John Brown's Last Speech

After being sentenced to death, John Brown delivered his last speech to the court. Below are excerpts from this speech.

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted -- the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered... in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends--either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class... it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction... I believe that to have interfered as I have done... was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments--I submit; so let it be done!



**John**

**“I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away; but with blood.”**

-letter from John Brown on the day he was hanged

# Interview with John Brown

# Brown's Interview in the Charlestown Prison

October 18, 1859

**Mr. Vallandigham:** Mr. Brown, who sent you here?

**Brown:** No man sent me here; it was my own prompting and that of my Maker, or that of the Devil,-whichever you please to ascribe it to. I acknowledge no master in human form.

**Mason:** What was your object in coming?

**Brown:** We came to free the slaves, and only that.

**A Volunteer:** How many men, in all, had you?

**Brown:** I came to Virginia with eighteen men only, besides myself.

**Mason:** How do you justify your acts?

**Brown:** I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity,-I say it without wishing to be offensive,-and it would be perfectly right for anyone to interfere with you so far as to free those you wilfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I do not say this insultingly.

**Mason:** I understand that.

**Brown:** I think I did right, and that others will do right who interfere with you at any time and at all times. I hold that the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you," applies to all who

would help others to gain their liberty.

**Lieutenant Stuart:** But don't you believe in the Bible?

**Brown:** Certainly I do.

**A Bystander:** Do you consider this a religious movement?

**Brown:** It is, in my opinion, the greatest service man can render to God.

**Bystander:** Do you consider yourself an instrument in the hands of Providence?

**Brown:** I do.

**Bystander:** Upon what principle do you justify your acts?

**Brown:** Upon the Golden Rule. I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them: that is why I am here; not to gratify any personal animosity, revenge, or vindictive spirit. It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged that are as good as you and as precious in the sight of God.