

Stewart Bell Jr. Archives
Handley Regional Library & Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society
P.O. Box 58, Winchester, Virginia 22604
Tel.: (540) 662-9041, ext. 17 • Email: archives@handleyregional.org
Website: www.handleyregional.org/archives

John Brown Collection
Collection Number: 961 THL

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS: Collection is open to all researchers.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING REPRODUCTION AND USE: Restrictions may apply concerning the use, photoduplication, or publication of items in this collection. Consult a member of the archives staff for information concerning these restrictions. The user assumes all responsibility for identifying and satisfying any claimants of copyright. Some materials may require special handling.

PROCESSING INFORMATION: Initial processing undertaken by Archives staff in 2022. Last updated by Buffy Knappenberger in January 2025.

EXTENT: .21 linear feet

DATE: 1800-2007, focusing primarily on Harper's Ferry Raid and trial, 1856-1859

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES: Photographs in this collection have been digitized and are available to view online through the Past Perfect online database: <http://handley.pastperfectonline.com/>

SCOPE & CONTENT: The collection covers the life and times of John Brown, noted abolitionist, and the leader of the raid on the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. While the collection deals mainly with the raid and his trial, it also covers his time in Bloody Kansas.

Centennial and sesquicentennial events are covered, and a life story was published within a month of his death.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL: John Brown, was born Torrington, CT in 1800, moved across the country including Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania. The father of 20 children and an ardent abolitionist, he was accused of murdering pro-slavery settlers in Kansas, known as "Bloody Kansas." In 1859 he led an unsuccessful slave insurrection in Harpers Ferry (then in Virginia). Brown took over the federal arsenal there but was quickly put down by local militia and Marines led by Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart. After a 36-hour battle, Brown surrendered. Brought to trial in Charles Town (now West Virginia), he was convicted of conspiracy and treason. He was hanged December 2, 1859

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Cohen, Stan, *John Brown "The Thundering Voice of Jehovah"* (Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., Inc, 1999.

IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF ACQUISITION: Gift of multiple donors.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX 1

Avis, John, jailer at Charles Town, Virginia where Brown was hanged, 2 leaves, typescript, with envelope.

Brown, John – Harper’s Ferry Raid – news articles:

Unnumbered items, printed/photocopies

Centennial Observance – John Brown Riad, Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia, October 15-18, 1959, historical booklet published by harper’s Ferry Area Foundation, 1959, 24 pages

The Guardian (3 items) Newsletter of the Jefferson County, WV Historical Society:

-April 2009 – List of John Brown Sesquicentennial Events

-July 2009 – Article on John Brown’s Raid

-January 2010 – Article of John Brown’s Raid and pictures of John Brown’s fort/armory.

Harper’s Ferry Raid – John Copeland, 30 leaves, printed (photocopy): Oberlin Thursday Lectures, Addresses and Essays by James Monroe, 1877 NOTE: do not publish without written permission of owner of original

John Brown and Border Warfare by R.H. Sherar, (1 item) transcript of Sherar who was one of five survivors of the Battle of Osawatomie, published by Santa Fe Historical Society, Baldwin City, Kansas, 1978, 26 pages

John Brown’s Raid at Harper’s Ferry: an eyewitness account by Charles White, edited by Rayburn S. Moore, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 67 (October 1959): 387-395, 8 leaves, printed

Life, Trial, and Conviction of Capt. John Brown (1 item) printed, magazine bearing the caption “Being a full account of the attempted insurrection at Harper’s Ferry, VA,” published by Robert M. DeWitt, New York, 1859, 100 pages

Memorial of John Brown, broadside, one leaf, printed

Physical Location: Oversize, Box 4

PHOTOGRAPHS

[961-001] One-half of a stereopticon slide with a portrait of John Brown, the fanatical abolitionist, circa 1860.

[961-002] One-half of a stereopticon slide showing family tombstone listing John Brown, among others, circa 1860.

[961-003] Reuben Lawrence (first caretaker of John Brown Farmstead at North Elba, NY) standing by John Brown's tombstone, circa 1900.