



# Community Bulletin



## Prospects of Peace: A Soldier's Prayer 1864

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park invites the public to attend *Prospects of Peace: A Soldier's Prayer 1864* December 5-6, 2009. This special living history program offers a glimpse into our American Civil War past during its last war-time Yuletide in 1864. Union soldiers attempted to create their own version of Christmas at the front, while living in a town of citizens with questionable loyalties. With the prospects of peace still four months away, young Charles Moulton, of the 34th Massachusetts Regiment, stationed in the Provost Marshal's office, mused about happier times at home. In 1864, the country was torn apart by war, but families remained hopeful of reunion with their loved ones.

The event will feature the town under federal occupation. For several months, Harpers Ferry had been the staging area for Union operations in the Shenandoah Valley; successful operations that brought the inevitable end of the conflict ever closer. Troops and supplies steadily poured south from Harpers Ferry by rail and wagon train. Over 60,000 federal soldiers passed through the Shenandoah Valley. Those same means of transportation brought back a steady stream of wounded soldiers, prisoners, and the dead. Buildings at Harpers Ferry that are not used to house supplies are

occupied by hospitals, the Christian Commission, and the Sanitary Commission. These organizations provided charity, aid and comfort to soldiers spending another Christmas far from home.

The Civil War would determine the freedom of 4 million enslaved people and the future of the Union. John Brown, the abolitionist, was hanged in 1859 for taking up arms against slavery at Harpers Ferry. The same United States that captured Brown and his supporters in 1859, will later assume the role of Brown's liberating army which never materialized at Harpers Ferry. With Lincoln's election in 1860 and the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Brown's dream of an army marching for freedom became a reality and ending slavery by force of arms had become a national policy.

By Christmas 1864, the death toll was rising and the country was still reacting to the recent presidential election. On the home front, Christmas spirit was tempered by concern for the safety of loved ones far from home and in harm's way. Hopes and prayers were that Santa Claus would visit every home, but that a notice of sad tidings from the battlefield would not. The spirit of Christmas, the spirit of hope and charity, the spirit of joy were

muted that holiday season, overshadowed by the clouds of war and an occupying army in the field.

Living history talks, tours, and special exhibits, will reveal the past and the present are more similar than one would think. The indomitable spirit of man may find a silver lining in any cloud, even in the clouds of war. It was a fervent hope, for America, and for the troops in the field, that the images of Christmas past and present may, in true Dickensian fashion, help alter the reality of Christmas future, so that all may truly enjoy peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

### Schedule of Events:

#### Saturday, December 5,

12-9 pm Historic exhibits open.

12-2 pm "Decking the Halls: Ornaments for the Tree" Make and take a 19th century style ornament. At the Lyceum Tent.

12:30-1 "Mail Call: Packages From Home" Witness local citizens and soldiers gathering to receive their censored mail from the US Provost Marshal's office. Begins at the Lyceum Tent.

1-2 pm "The Perfect Gift: Christmas 1864" What did the people of Harpers Ferry consider as appropriate gifts for this Yuletide?" Guided tour.

2-3 pm "A Cry For Peace. . .On Earth" Soldiers look for disloyal citizens aiding Confederate John Mosby. Guided tour including weapons firing and demonstration.

3-4 pm "Twelfth Night Great Cake" a cornerstone of Yuletide confections. Meet at Roeder's Confectionery.

3-5 pm "A Grand Military and Citizen's Ball" Join the 34th Massachusetts Officers and their wives as they host a Victorian Dance. Dance instruction provided to period dance music.

6:30 pm "How the Yankees Stole Santa Claus" A Victorian shadow show for children of all ages.

7:00 pm "Prospects For Peace: A Soldier's Prayer" A lantern-lit walking tour. Space is limited. Reserve your free ticket at the Shenandoah Street Information Center.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The history of Harpers Ferry has few parallels in the American drama. It is more than one event, one date, or one individual. It is multi-layered, involving a diverse number of people and events, decisions and actions that influenced the course of our nation's history. Visit Harpers Ferry and step into history.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park  
P.O. Box 65  
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425

Visitor Center  
304-535-6029

Harpers Ferry Historical Association Bookshop  
304-525-6881

Harpers Ferry NHP Home Page  
[www.nps.gov/hafe/](http://www.nps.gov/hafe/)

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

10 pm Last park shuttle departs the lower town for entrance station parking.

### Sunday, December 6, 2009

11-4pm Historic exhibits open

12 noon "The Perfect Gift: Christmas 1864" What did the people of Harpers Ferry consider as appropriate gifts for this Yuletide?" Guided tour.

12:30-1pm "Mail Call: Packages From Home" Witness local citizens and soldiers gathering to receive their censored mail from the US Provost Marshal's office. Begins at the Lyceum Tent.

1-2 pm "Comfits and Sugared Confections" Come see the process of making Yuletide confections. Meet at Roeder's Confectionery.

2-3 pm "A Cry For Peace. . .On Earth" Soldiers look for disloyal citizens aiding Confederate John Mosby. Guided tour including weapons firing and demonstration.

3-4 pm "Ho For Christmas" Carolers, sometimes called ballad mongers, strolled the streets in America tempting pedestrians to purchase sheet music of carols. Join this musical performance.

4 pm Special exhibits close.

7 pm Last park shuttle departs the lower town for entrance station parking.

## Park Announces Holiday Schedule

The Superintendent of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park recently announced that the park will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, November 26; Christmas Day, December 25; and New Year's Day, January 1, 2010. The park will reopen the day following each holiday at 8:00 a.m.

The Harpers Ferry Historical Association's Bookshop on Shenandoah Street will also be closed on these holidays

## Award Winners Recognized

National Capital Regional Director Peggy O'Dell was pleased to present three of the regional awards to employees from Harpers Ferry Park.

The Maintenance Division won the Support to Interpretation Award for their work in clearing and rehabilitating the U.S. Armory Grounds with new trails, stairs, exhibits and landscaping. Their efforts have opened this previously overgrown acreage allowing visitors new educational and interpretive experiences.

Catherine Bragaw was presented the Sustained Interpretive Services Award for creating an innovative model for education programs. Bragaw and her education team have developed eleven curriculum programs and presented ranger-guided programs to nearly 180,000 students over the past three years.

Dennis Frye received the Freeman Tilden Award for collaborating with Harpers Ferry Middle School in an effort to involve and engage youth in the 150th anniversary of John Brown's war against slavery. Seventy sixth through eighth grade students researched and produced "Of the Student, By the Student and For the Student" vodcasts, launching one of the National Park Service's first service-learning projects.

and for inventory on January 4-5, 2010. This holiday schedule allows park and bookshop employees to spend time with their families.

For additional information regarding park schedules and events, please call the Visitor Center at 304-535-6298 or log onto the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/hafe/](http://www.nps.gov/hafe/).