ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY

October 18

On the morning of October 18, 1859, United States Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee stormed the armory engine-house at Harpers Ferry, capturing John Brown and members of his raiding party who had barricaded themselves in the building.

Storming of the armory engine-house at Harpers Ferry

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CSO: SS.8.22, ELA.8.1

Investigate the Document: (Boyd Blynn Stutler Collection Ms78-1)
1. What charges does John Brown explain he has been found guilty of in the letter to his wife?
2. Does John Brown feel guilty for his actions at Harper’s Ferry?
3. In John Brown’s postscript, he states that he has learned of his sentence; how was his sentence to be carried out? On what day?

Think Critically: How did John Brown’s Raid at Harpers Ferry further intensify sectional tensions prior the Civil War? What was the goal of the raid?
Jefferson Co.
Charlestoun, Nov. 21st, Oct. 1852.

My dear wife & children everywhere,

I suppose you have learned before this in the newspapers that 26 weeks ago today we were fighting for our lives in the Battle of Harpers Ferry. That during the fight, Watson was mortally wounded; Oliver killed, Mr. Thompson killed, & Soaphin slightly wounded.

That night the following day I was taken prisoner immediately after which I received several Sabre cuts in my head & Rayone stab in my body. As soon as I can learn Watson died of his wound on Wednesday the 2nd or Thursday the 3rd when I was taken.

Baufhini was killed when I was taken. Anderson I suppose also. I have since been tried & found guilty of treason & murder in the first degree. I have not yet received my sentence. No others of the company with whom I were acquainted were so far as I can learn either killed or taken. Under all these terrible calamities I feel quite cheerful in the assurance that God means it will overrule all for his glory & the best possible good. I feel no sense of guilt in the matter: not even mortification on account of my imprisonment & tortures. I feel perfectly assured that very soon no member of my family will feel any possible disposition to blush on my account. Already dear friends at a distance with kindest sympathies are cherishing me with the assurance that posterity at least will do me justice. I shall commend you all together with my beloved & preserved daughters in love to our Father which I have no doubt will soon reach you.

I also commend you all to him whose mercy endures for ever, to the God of my fathers whose I am, & whom I know. He will never leave you nor forsake you unless you forsake him. Finally may your dearly beloved be of good comfort. Be sure
to remembe & to follow my advice + my example too. It has been consistent with the holy religion of Jesus Christ in which I remain a most firm & humble believer. Never forget the poor nor think any thing your brethren on them to be lost, be you ever though they may be as black as Charcoal the Christian Church who saved for Simeon in the pit of the dungeon, or as black as the one to whom Phillip preached Christ. Be sure to entertain strangers for many some have. Remember them then that are in bonds as bound with them. I am in the charge of a jailer like the one who took charge of Paul & Silas. If you may part assured that both will suffice to kind faces are more or less about me, whilst thousands are thirsting for my blood. These light afflictions which are but for a moment shall end and by as great a measure succeeding + eternal weight of glory.

I hope to be able to write you again. My wounds are doing well. Copy this & send it to your nearest brother. Be this to comfort them. Write more few words in regard to the welfare of all. God Almighty, help you all to make you joyful in the midst of all your tribulations. Write to Mr. Brown, Jefferson Co., for one of Capt. John Aries Ton Affectionate husband & father.

John Brown
Dec' 1858

P.S. Tuesday Dec 6th I was sentenced to burned & to hang next Do not grieve on my account, I am still quite cheerful. To help you all from Ever

J. Brown

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