

# THE GATHERING STORM

IMAGES OF AMERICA ON THE EVE OF THE CIVIL WAR

## Insurrection at Harpers Ferry

Abolitionist John Brown supported violent action against the South to end slavery and played a major role in starting the Civil War. After the Pottawatomie Massacre, Brown returned to the North and plotted a far more threatening act. In October 1859, he and 19 supporters, armed with "Beecher's Bibles," led a raid on the federal armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in an effort to capture and confiscate the arms located there, distribute them among local slaves and begin armed insurrection. A small force of U.S. Marines, led by Col. Robert E. Lee, put down the uprising. There were casualties on both sides; seven people were killed and at least 10 more were injured before Brown and seven of his remaining men were captured. On October 27, Brown was tried for treason against the state of Virginia, convicted and hanged in Charles Town on December 2. In the five weeks before his execution, Brown entertained the press in his jail cell, turned the episode into a media circus, gained maximum publicity for his cause and further heightening regional tensions.



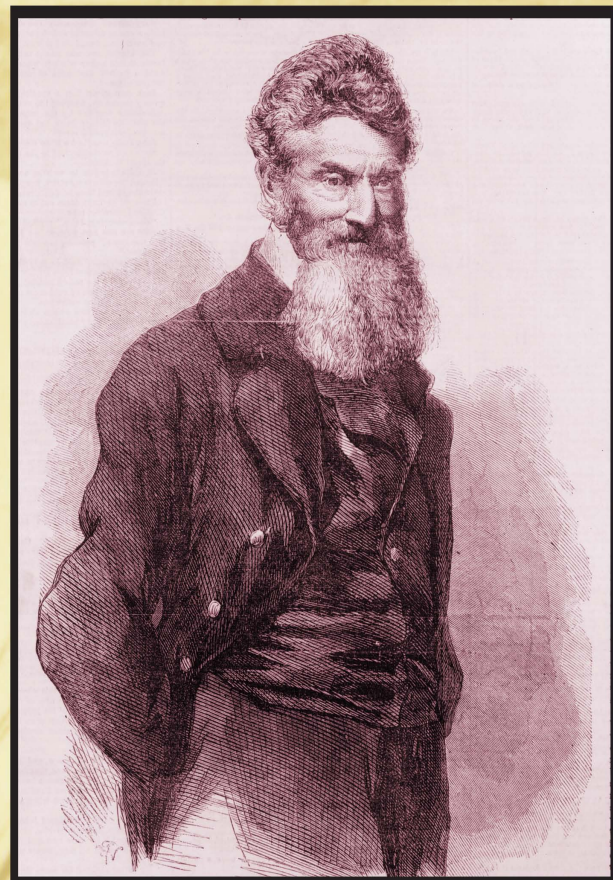
In 1801, the United States Armory and Arsenal opened at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, located at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers. The facility, situated in the center of this 1865 image, produced more than 600,000 muskets, rifles and pistols during the next 60 years, and became the target of John Brown's Raid in 1859. *Library of Congress*



Learning of the raid, local citizens and militia soon pinned Brown and his men inside the engine house, seen in the center of this wartime photograph. The structure has subsequently come to be known as John Brown's Fort. *Library of Congress*



A special artist for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper made this on-the-spot illustration of U.S. Marines under the command of Col. Robert E. Lee storming the engine house on October 18, 1859. Inside they captured a wounded Brown and freed his hostages. *Library of Congress*



This engraving of Brown was published on the cover of the November 19, 1859 issue of Leslie's. It was made from a photograph taken a year earlier by New York photographer Martin Lawrence. *Library of Congress*