

## *John Brown in Chambersburg*

John Brown spent a portion of the year, leading up to the raid on Harpers Ferry, in the small town of Chambersburg. But, the plans he made in the heart of Franklin County had a lasting effect on the lives of a number of people and ultimately led to the end of his.

## *Early Life of John Brown*

John Brown was born in Torrington, CT on May 9, 1800. Five years later, the young boy and his parents, Owen and Ruth, moved to Hudson, OH. It was here where Brown learned to drive cattle, developed friendships with Native Americans, and would eventually become an adult.

Historians believe Brown saw his first black slave during a cattle drive into Pennsylvania. Some believe he even witnessed that slave being severely beaten by his master, which could have led to his hatred of anyone who inflicted pain upon another human being. After all, Brown believed that "all men are created equal."



## *history in chambersburg*

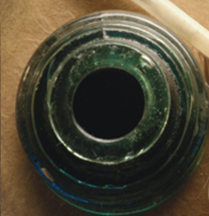


*John Brown*

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## *"Bleeding Kansas"*

Five of Brown's sons moved to Kansas in 1854. The state was still being settled at the time, with a mixture of people from the North and the South bringing the ideas of both freedom and slavery for African Americans. It wasn't long before Brown's sons called their father into action.

He arrived in Kansas in October of 1855, but it wasn't until the following year when Brown went on the attack. He and his group led pro-slavery men from their homes at Pottawatomie Creek on the night of May 24, 1856, before killing them with their swords.

## *John Brown in Chambersburg*

It was June of 1859 when John Brown arrived in Chambersburg, where he secured lodging for himself at Mary Ritner's boarding house on East King Street. This would serve as a Northern Headquarters for Brown and his followers, as they planned their raid on Harpers Ferry,

directing the stockpiling of guns, ammunition and pikes from railroad cars to warehouses, later transporting them by wagon to Virginia, into a section of the state that would become West Virginia, which was formed during the Civil War.

Later that summer, abolitionist Frederick Douglass came to town. Brown told him of his plans to seize the arsenal and of distributing its "huge store of weapons among the blacks who would revolt throughout the countryside." Douglass refused to go along with the idea, referring to it as "sheer madness," but he did agree to deliver a speech at Franklin Hall (beside the courthouse) before leaving Chambersburg.

This conversation took place at an old stone quarry on the west side of town. A historical marker is now located near the spot on West Loudoun Street.



While in Franklin County, Brown also spent time in Mont Alto, where he taught Sunday School at the Emmanuel Chapel (on the present-day campus of Penn State Mont Alto), in Greencastle, where he stayed at the Union Hotel, and at the Cumberland Valley Railroad Depot, which he used when transporting weapons into Chambersburg.

## *Attack on Harpers Ferry*

After mapping out an attack on Harpers Ferry during his time in South Central Pennsylvania, Brown put his plan into action on October 16, 1859. He and his men departed from a farmhouse in Maryland, with a goal of arming rebellious slaves and using them to strike fear into the hearts of slave owners in Virginia.

The raid started strong, with Brown's team capturing watchmen and taking hostages. But, the next day didn't go so well. Farmers, shopkeepers and local militia surrounded the armory the raiders were staying in. Two of Brown's sons were killed while he was wounded and captured, later found guilty of treason.

## *Aftermath*

John Brown was executed on December 2, 1859, ending any chance to realize his quest for equality that started as a young man, was pushed forward in Chambersburg and was carried out in Harpers Ferry. His impact, though, has not been forgotten.

