



Source #1 - John Starry Testimony (Portions of this report have been removed)

JOHN D. STARRY, sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Chairman: Will you state at what time you first heard of the presence of an armed party at Harper's Ferry; where you heard it; and what occurred when you first became aware of it?

Starry. On Sunday night, the 16th of October, about half past one o'clock, I heard a shot fired in the direction of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bridge and immediately afterwards a cry of distress, as if somebody had been hurt.

At the same time I heard considerable confusion about the Baltimore and Ohio railroad train-the starting point just opposite the hotel.

I jumped out of my bed. I went to the window and saw two armed men passing from the bridge towards the armory gate. These men were low fellows.

While I was standing there a tall man came from the direction of the armory gate, and met them near the Winchester railroad. Some noise about the hotel attracted his attention, and he turned and went towards the armory gate again. About that time some of the passengers came out from between the hotel and the railroad station, and the tall man said to them, "The first man that fires at me I will shoot," or, "the first man who interrupts me," or some such expression as that.

In a very short time I was in the street, and there was some firing going on between the railroad party or citizens and that man. I did not know who fired first. There were several shots passed between them.

I was then going across the street towards the railroad office. When I got there I found the Negro porter, Hayward, shot; the ball entering from behind, through the body, nearly on a line with the base of the heart, a little below it. He told me that he had been out on the railroad bridge looking for a watchman who was missing, and he had been ordered to halt by some men who were there, and, instead of doing that, he turned to go back to the office and as he turned they shot him in the back. I understood from him that he walked from there to the office, and when I found him he was lying on a plank upon two chairs in the office.

Chairman: Could you see whether those men were armed?

Starry: Yes, sir; I knew they were armed. I stood until they were very close to me.

About four o'clock I heard a wagon coming down the street. About five minutes after five o'clock, I saw a four-horse team driving over the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bridge. I did not know whose it was. In that wagon there were three men standing up in the front part, with spears in their hands, white men, and two were walking alongside, armed with rifles. I did not see any Negroes.

I understood afterwards there were Negroes with them, but I did not see them.

About daylight, as these strangers seemed to have possession of the public works there, I determined to get on my horse and go and notify Mr. Kitzmiller, acting superintendent of the armory,

of the condition of things there, but before I did that I went to the island of Virginius, and roused up Mr. Welch and others there. I knew there were a good many men about the mill and cooper-shop there. I told them the condition of things as well as I could. I met no one on the way.

I then got my horse and came out into Shenandoah Street, and had to go perhaps fifty yards before I made the turn of the street leading to the hill. About the time I was making that turn, I saw three of these men coming across from the armory gate towards the arsenal. They had just made a few steps from the gate into the street. I did not know whether their intention was to stop me or not. They made a sort of half turn, and I was out of their sight in a moment.

I went to Mr. Kitzmiller and informed him that the armory was in possession of an armed band. I then passed up to Bolivar, and roused up some of the people, and went from there to Hall's Works, and found three of these men there armed. I went back to the hillside then, and tried to get the citizens together, to see what we could do to get rid of these fellows. They seemed to be very troublesome. When I got on the hill I learned that they had shot Boerley. That was probably about 7 o'clock. Boerley was an Irishman, living there, a citizen of the town. He died very soon afterwards.

I had ordered the Lutheran church bell to be rung to get the citizens together to see what sort of arms they had; I found one or two squirrel rifles and a few shot guns; I had sent a messenger to Charlestown in the meantime for Captain Rowan, commander of a volunteer company there: I also sent messengers to the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to stop the trains coming east, and not let them approach the Ferry, and also a messenger to Shepherdstown.

When I could find no guns fit for use, and learned from the operatives and foremen at the armory that all the guns that they knew of were in the arsenal and in possession of these men, I thought I had better go to Charlestown myself, perhaps; I did so, and hurried Captain Rowan off. When I returned to the Ferry, I found that the citizens had gotten some guns out of one of the workshops - guns which had been placed there to keep them out of the high water -and were pretty well armed.

I assisted, from that time until some time in the night, in various ways, organizing the citizens and getting them to the best place of attack, and sometimes acting professionally.

Chairman: Were you aware of the killing of any other person than this free Negro you have mentioned?

Starry: No, sir; I did not see the others; I saw Mr. Turner after he was dead, and also Mr. Beckham; I did not know that Mr. Turner was shot until after he was dead.

Chairman: Did you see this man Brown during that night, so as to identify him that you know of?

Starry. I do not think I did; I asked him afterwards if he was at the armory gate when I was there, but he said he was not, and did not know why I had not been taken prisoner.

Chairman: Did you see any of Brown's party killed?

Starry: I saw a man shot in the Potomac River on Monday; I suppose about one O' clock. He was shot from near the small bridge, at the upper end of the trestle work, or from the hill side. He was attempting to cross the Potomac River from the Virginia to the Maryland side.

Chairman: How many of the Brown party did you see dead, including those who were in the engine-house?

Starry: Four dead and Stevens wounded, and the yellow fellow Leary wounded. I saw ten of Brown's party dead altogether, including those in the engine-house.

Chairman: How many of those ten were Negroes?

Starry: I only give you the names of the Negroes as given to me by Stevens - Leary and Anderson and Daingerfield Newby were the Negroes killed. Anderson was of very light color, but was given to me by Stevens, one of the party, as a colored man.

Chairman: Do you know the number of citizens who were killed?

Starry: Four: three white men and the Negro Hayward. Hayward first, Boerley, Mr. Turner, and Mr. Beckham. Beckham was the last shot, about four o'clock in the evening.

Chairman: Were there any of the citizens wounded?

Starry: Edward McCabe was wounded. There were some of the Berkeley men wounded, who were acting as military. I do not know any other citizen of Harper's Ferry who was wounded but McCabe.

Source #2 - Robert E. Lee's Report from Harpers Ferry (Portions of this report have been removed)

HEADQUARTERS HARPER'S FERRY:

COLONEL: I have the honor to report, for the information of the Secretary of War, that on arriving here on the night of the 17th instant, in obedience to Special Orders No. 194 of that date from your office, I learned that a party of insurgents, about 11 p. m. on the 16th, had seized the watchmen stationed at the armory, arsenal, rifle factory, and bridge across the Potomac, and taken possession of those points.

They then dispatched six men, under one of their party, called Captain Aaron C. Stevens, to arrest the principal citizens in the neighborhood and incite the Negroes to join in the insurrection...

...As day advanced, and the citizens of Harper's Ferry commenced their usual avocations, they were separately captured, to the number of forty, as well as I could learn, and confined in one room of the fire engine house of the armory, which seems early to have been selected as a point of defense.

About 11 a. m. the volunteer companies from Virginia began to arrive, and the Jefferson Guards and volunteers from Charlestown, under Captain J. W. Rowen, I understood, were first on the ground...

These companies, under the direction of Colonels R. W. Baylor and John T. Gibson, forced the insurgents to abandon their positions at the bridge and in the village, and to withdraw within the armory enclosure, where they fortified themselves in the fire-engine house, and carried ten of their

prisoners for the purpose of insuring their safety and facilitating their escape, whom they termed hostages....

After sunset more troops arrived.... At this point I came up with these last-named troops, and leaving General Edgerton and his command on the Maryland side of the river for the night, caused the marines to proceed to Harper's Ferry, and placed them within the armory grounds to prevent the possibility of the escape of the insurgents... I made preparations to attack the insurgents at daylight. But for the fear of sacrificing the lives of some of the gentlemen held by them as prisoners in a midnight assault, I should have ordered the attack at once.

Their safety was the subject of painful consideration, and to prevent, if possible, jeopardizing their lives; I determined to summon the insurgents to surrender. As soon after daylight as the arrangements were made Lieutenant J. E. B. Stewart...was dispatched, under a flag, with a written summons, Knowing the character of the leader of the insurgents, I did not expect it would be accepted.

I had therefore directed that the volunteer troops, under their respective commanders, should be paraded on the lines assigned them outside the armory, and had prepared a storming party of twelve marines, under their commander, Lieutenant Green, and had placed them close to the engine-house, and secure from its fire.

Three marines were furnished with sledge-hammers to break in the doors, and the men were instructed how to distinguish our citizens from the insurgents; to attack with the bayonet and not to injure the blacks detained in custody unless they resisted.

Lieutenant Stewart was also directed not to receive from the insurgents any counter propositions. If they accepted the terms offered, they must immediately deliver up their arms and release their prisoners. If they did not, he must, on leaving the engine-house, give me the signal.

My object was, with a view of saving our citizens, to have as short an interval as possible between the summons and attack. The summons, as I had anticipated, was rejected. At the concerted signal the storming party moved quickly to the door and commenced the attack. The fire-engines within the house had been placed by the besieged close to the doors. The doors were fastened by ropes, the spring of which prevented their being broken by the blows of the hammers.

The men were therefore ordered to drop the hammers, and, with a portion of the reserve, to use as a battering-ram a heavy ladder, with which they dashed in a part of the door and gave admittance to the storming party.

The fire of the insurgents up to this time had been harmless. At the threshold one marine fell mortally wounded. The rest, led by Lieutenant Green and Major Russell, quickly ended the contest.

The insurgents that resisted were bayoneted. Their leader, John Brown, was cut down by the sword of Lieutenant Green, and our citizens were protected by both officers and men. The whole was over in a few minutes.

After our citizens were liberated and the wounded cared for, Lieutenant Colonel S. S. Mills, of the 53d Maryland regiment... was sent on the Maryland side of the river to search for John E. Cook, and to

bring in the arms, &c., belonging to the insurgent party, which were said to be deposited in a school-house two and a half miles distant.

Subsequently, Lieutenant J. E. B. Stewart, with a party of marines, was dispatched to the Kennedy farm, situated in Maryland, about four and a half miles from Harper's Ferry, which had been rented by John Brown, and used as the depot for his men and munitions. Colonel Mills saw nothing of Cook, but found the boxes of arms, (Sharp's carbines and belt revolvers,) and recovered Mr. Washington's wagon and horses. Lieutenant Stewart found also at the Kennedy farm a number of sword pikes, blankets, shoes, tents, and all the necessaries for a campaign. These articles have been deposited in the government storehouse at the armory.

...it appears that the party consisted of nineteen men-fourteen white and five black. That they were headed by John Brown, of some notoriety in Kansas, who in June last located himself in Maryland, at the Kennedy farm, where he has been engaged in preparing to capture the United States works at Harper's Ferry.

He avows that his object was the liberation of the slaves of Virginia, and of the whole South; and acknowledges that he has been disappointed in his expectations of aid from the black as well as white population, both in the Southern and Northern States.

The blacks, whom he forced from their homes in this neighborhood, as far as I could learn, gave him no voluntary assistance. The servants of Messrs. Washington and Allstadt, retained at the armory, took no part in the conflict, and those carried to Maryland returned to their homes as soon as released. The result proves that the plan was the attempt of a fanatic or madman, who could only end in failure; and its temporary success, was owing to the panic and confusion he succeeded in creating by magnifying his numbers.

I append a list of the insurgents, (marked B.) Cook is the only man known to have escaped. The other survivors of the expedition, viz: John Brown, A. C. Stevens, Edwin Coppic, and Green Shields, (*alias* S. Emperor,) I have delivered into the hands of the marshal of the western district of Virginia and the sheriff of Jefferson county...

Source #3 – George and Mary Mauzy Letters

George and Mary Mauzy were residents of Harpers Ferry who experienced John Brown's Raid. Their daughter and son-in-law (James and Eugenia Burton) were living in England at the time. James Burton had been a machinist, a foreman, and then the Acting Master Armorer at the Armory between 1844 and 1854. Here are some emotional letters to England. The original spelling and grammar has been preserved.

October 17, 1859
Monday afternoon
4 o'clock

Oh my dear friend such a day as this. Heaven forbid that I should ever witness such another.

Last night a band of ruffians took possession of the town, took the keys of the armory and made Captive a great many of our Citizens. I cannot write the particulars for I am too Nervous. For such a

sight as I have just beheld. Our men chased them in the river just below here and I saw them shot down like dogs. I saw one poor wretch [sic] rise above the water and some one strike him with a club he sank again and in a moment they dragged him out a Corpse. I do not know yet how many are shot but I shall never forget the sight. They just marched two wretches [sic] their Arms bound fast up to the jail. My dear husband shouldered his rifle and went to join our men May god protect him. Even while I write I hear the guns in the distance I heard they were fighting down the street.

I cannot write any more I must wait and see what the end will be.

—M.E. Mauzy

To Eugenia Burton, Enfield, England
October 18, 1859

This has been one of the saddest days that Harper's Ferry ever experienced. This morning, when the armorers went to the shops to go to work, lo and behold, the shops had been taken possession of by a set of abolitionists and the doors were guarded by Negroes with rifles.

—George Mauzy

To Mr. & Mrs. James H. Burton
December 3, 1859

My dear Children:

Well the great agony is over. "Old Osawatomie Brown" was executed yesterday at noon – his wife came here the day before, & paid him a short visit, after which she returned here under an escort, where she and her company remained until the body came down from Charlestown, in the evening, after which she took charge of it and went home.

This has been one of the most remarkable circumstances that ever occurred in this country, this old fanatic made no confession whatever, nor concession that he was wrong, but contended that he was right in everything he done, that he done great service to God, would not let a minister of any denomination come near or say anything to him, but what else could be expected from him, or anyone else who are imbued with "Freeloveism, Socialism, Spiritualism," and all the other isms that were ever devised by man or devil.

There is an immense concourse of military at Charlestown, not less than 2000 men are quartered there, the Courthouse, all the churches & all the Lawyers offices are occupied. We have upwards of 300 regulars & 75 or 80 Montgomery Guards. These men were all sent here by the Sec. of War & Gov. Wise to prevent a rescue of Brown & his party by northern infidels and fanatics: of which they boasted loudly, but their courage must have oozed out of their finger ends, as none made their appearance. We are keeping nightly watch, all are vigilant, partys of 10 men out every night, quite a number of incendiary fires have taken place in this vicinity & County, such as grain stacks, barns & other out-buildings.

—George Mauzy

(Source: National Park Service, Harpers Ferry)

Source #4 - John Brown's Address

To the Virginia Court, when about to receive the sentence of death for his heroic attempt at Harper's Ferry, to give deliverance to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free.

[Mr. Brown, upon inquiry whether he had anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon him, in a clear, distinct voice replied:]

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny everything but what I have already admitted, of a design on my part to free slaves. I intended, certainly, to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri, and there took Slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moving them through the country, and finally leaving them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended . I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite Slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection, and that is that it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner, and which I admit has been fairly proved, -- for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case --had I so interfered in behalf of the Rich, the Powerful, the Intelligent, the so-called Great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy a reward rather than a punishment.

This Court acknowledges too, as I suppose, the validity of the LAW OF GOD. I see a book kissed, which I suppose to be the BIBLE, or at least the NEW TESTAMENT, which teaches me that, "All things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them." It teaches me further to, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that GOD is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of this despised poor, is no wrong, but RIGHT.

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and MINGLE MY BLOOD FURTHER WITH THE BLOOD OF MY CHILDREN, and with the blood of millions in this Slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, - I say LET IT BE DONE.

Let me say one word further: I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected; but I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention, and what was not. I never had any design against the liberty of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason or excite Slaves to rebel or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say also in regard to the statements made by some of those who were connected with me; I hear that it has been stated by some of them, that I have induced them to join me; but the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. Not one but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with, till the day they came to me, and that was for the purpose I have stated. Now, I am done.

- John Brown