

**2011 Summer Institute for Teachers
Partnership with APUS
HAFE workshop July 23-25**

War Comes to Harpers Ferry: 1861

Description

This course will explore this defining period of history and its lasting impact on the American story.

On April 17, 1861, Virginia seceded from the Union, placing the town of Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and its U.S. Armory in a precarious position. Government troops, which had been stationed here since January of that year to guard that important facility, nervously awaited orders and assistance. When their commander, Lieutenant Roger Jones, realized help would not be coming, and knowing he could not allow the enemy to capture the valuable Armory machinery and the stash of weapons then stored in the two arsenal buildings, decided the only option available was to destroy the Armory and the Arsenal. The night of April 18, with hundreds of Virginia militia closing in on the town, Jones's soldiers blew up the Armory and the Arsenal, then made their escape across the bridge into Maryland.

Thus began a plethora of events in Harpers Ferry and the surrounding area during our Civil War, many of which helped decide the ultimate fate of the newly-formed Confederacy. During the 2011 teachers' institutes, the Harpers Ferry Historical Association, in cooperation with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, will focus on the events which took place between the burning of the Armory and the Arsenal, and the arrival of Union Colonel Dixon Miles in March 1862. This marks the beginning of federal occupation for Harpers Ferry. In addition to that event, this year's teachers' institutes will also look carefully at the following:

- The arrival of Thomas Jonathan Jackson, and under his guidance, the training of the Confederate troops stationed here during the spring of 1861;
- The transfer of the weapon-making machinery from the two armories south;
- The capture of numerous engines and railroad cars from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; then the subsequent transfer of those vehicles south;
- The arrival of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston;
- The mid-June 1861 destruction of the Amory buildings, and all the bridges in Harpers Ferry and the surrounding area by Confederate forces, followed by the retreat of those forces from Harpers Ferry south to Winchester (the opening moves in this part of Virginia of the First Manassas Campaign);
- The beginning of an extremely difficult period of time for the citizens of Harpers Ferry, most of whom will decide to leave;
- The time of peril for the town, as it literally becomes a "no-man's land," caught between Union forces across the Potomac River in Maryland, and Confederate forces, that will, from time to time, make an appearance in the area;
- The little-known October 16, 1861, Battle of Bolivar Heights, which pitted one Pennsylvania infantry regiment against Confederate cavalry commanded by the famous Southern cavalier, Turner Ashby;
- The various forays by Union troops into Harpers Ferry, to destroy the buildings at "The Point," and to acquire needed food and fodder;
- In March 1862, the actual occupation by Harpers Ferry and the adjacent ground by Union forces;
- Finally, the arrival of Colonel Dixon Miles, who was put in command of those troops, now called the "Railroad Brigade."