

**Virginia  
Sesquicentennial  
of the  
American  
Civil War**



**Warren County  
Sesquicentennial  
Committee**

**Patrick Farris, Co-Chair**  
*Warren Heritage Society*

**Robert Johnston**  
*Warren County Public Schools*

**Jennifer Keck**  
*Town of Front Royal  
Tourism Department*

**Karen Kenyon**  
*United Daughters  
of the Confederacy*

**Kevin King**  
*The Warren Sentinel*

**Donald LeFever**  
*Town of Front Royal  
Tourism Department*

**Suzanne Silek, Co-Chair**  
*Warren Rifles Confederate Me-  
morial Museum*

**Douglas P. Stanley**  
*Warren County Administrator*

**G. Dwayne "Dewey" Vaughan**  
*Sons of Confederate Veterans*

**Matthew Wendling**  
*Warren County  
Planning Department*

**Bruce Weichmann**  
*Resident, Town of Front Royal*

**Joseph W. A. Whitehorne**  
*Lord Fairfax  
Community College*

# Warren County Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee

## 2009 Projects and Events

**Newspaper Insert with The Warren Sentinel**

**1859/2009 Historical Calendar**

**Civil War Trails sign cleaning**

**Lecture by Prof. Jonathan Noyales:  
Warren County, the Shenandoah Valley  
and the Harpers Ferry Raid of 1859**

## Formation of Local Sesquicentennial Committee

*Minutes from the regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Warren held in the Warren County Government Center on August 5, 2008 at 9:00 a.m., during which the Warren County Local Committee of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission was created.*

**Present:** Archie A. Fox, Chairman (Fork District); Glenn L. White, Vice-Chairman (North River District); Tony F. Carter, (Happy Creek District); Linda P. Glavis (South River District); Richard H. Traczyk, (Shenandoah District)

**Request** – Establishment of Warren County Local Committee of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission Members and Affiliate Organizations and Appointment of Members – Doug Stanley

Mr. Stanley noted that in 2006 the Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission (HB 1440) to commemorate events that lead to and occurred during the years of the Civil War in Virginia. In order to facilitate the broadest participation amongst residents of the Commonwealth, the Commission asked

all independent cities and counties to create a local committee of the Commission. Local committees would be charged with creating and scheduling local events to occur between January 2009 and December 2015 and to initiate research projects and issue publications related to each locality's experiences in the Civil War. Fundraising would be permissible with the Commonwealth acting as bank teller and accountant for funds raised and dispersed. The Warren Heritage Society proposed that the Board appoint the following members to the local committee:

*Patrick Farris (Warren Heritage Society)*  
*Robert Johnston (Warren County Public Schools)*  
*Jennifer Keck (Town of Front Royal Tourism Department)*  
*Karen Kenyon (United Daughters of the Confederacy)*  
*Kevin King (Warren Sentinel)*  
*Donald LeFever (Town of Front Royal Tourism Department)*  
*Suzanne Silek (Warren Rifles Confederate Memorial Museum)*  
*Douglas P. Stanley (Warren County)*  
*Duane Vaughan (Sons of Confederate Veterans)*

*Matthew Wendling (Warren County Planning Department)*

*Bruce Weichmann (Resident, Town of Front Royal)*

*Joseph Whitehorne (Lord Fairfax Community College)*

Mr. Stanley noted that designation by the Board would allow the work of the local committee to proceed as soon as possible as there were only five months remaining prior to the start of the Sesquicentennial and the local committee would be eligible to apply for grant funds from the state. They would propose a calendar of events each year for the Board's approval.

On a motion by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Traczyk and by the following vote, the Board of Supervisors approved the request to establish the Warren County Local Committee of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission Members and Affiliate Organizations and appointed Patrick Farris, Robert Johnston, Jennifer Keck, Karen Kenyon, Kevin King, Donald LeFever, Suzanne Silek, Douglas P. Stanley, Duane Vaughan, Matthew Wendling, Bruce Weichmann and Joe Whitehorne to the committee:

Aye: Carter, Fox, Glavis, Traczyk, White

# Warren County and the John Brown Raid on Harpers Ferry

Right, the armory's fire engine house at Harpers Ferry, where the spark that ignited the Civil War began with John Brown's Raid.

Below, the Jefferson County Courthouse in Charlestown where John Brown and several of his raiders were placed on trial.



Photos by Patrick Farris

## *The spark that ignited the Civil War*

One brisk October morning in 1859 an assault on the US armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia began. The event would become known as the spark that ignited the Civil War, and indeed served to accelerate the coming of that terrible conflict. The John Brown Raid, however, outlived its role in Civil War history to remain indelibly fixed in the larger tapestry of American history. The morning of October 16th in Harpers Ferry saw Americans waging combat against fellow Americans, it saw no attempt to distinguish soldier from civilian, and it was committed in the name of a cause – abolition of slavery – its proponents saw as transcending national boundaries and laws.

John Brown and his raiders had a plan incredibly simple in design but overreaching in its hopes and with only nineteen men – Brown included – to carry it out, was doomed to failure. Brown and his men intended to capture Harpers Ferry with its arsenal of weapons, distribute them southward along the Blue Ridge to slaves in Virginia and points further south who they hoped would then rise up against their masters and the system of bondage. The complex realities of everyday life, relationships and in-

terdependencies in slaveholding regions, however – in addition to the control of state governments on the flow of information and movement of residents – meant that slaves did not rise up following the raid. Indeed, in one of the many ironic and tragic turns of the assault, the first person killed was a free African American man employed by the railroad and a resident of Winchester, Virginia. Brown and his too few men quickly found themselves surrounded in the fire-engine house of the armory, and the assault came to a violent but quick conclusion.

John Brown and several of his raiders were captured and were placed on trial at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Charlestown. John Brown was sentenced to death and executed in December, but America and its people would never be the same. The United States, rocked back on its heels by the assault, would begin raising new and reinvigorating old militias for local defense and for the cataclysmic war many saw as inevitable. Virginia, her soil burned by this first spark, would soon be scorched as she became the crucible of that war. The Shenandoah Valley and Warren County, stung by the

proximity of the raid to hearth and home, would soon be tormented by the tramp of armies, the carnage of battle, and a war that knew no civilians. The homes, churches, businesses, farms, transportation infrastructure – the very land – would pay a heavy price for its proximity to the front lines.

Warren County would take many years to recover, and the Harpers Ferry Raid would be recalled locally as the quake that shook the beast of war awake. The year 2009 begins our state's sesquicentennial commemoration and recollection of those terrible years of war, from its spark in 1859 to its smoldering conclusion in 1865. This year we remember the shock, the apprehension, the great quake of 1859 – the John Brown Raid on Harpers Ferry. This year we remember that Front Royal lay less than 55 miles south of Harpers Ferry, a distance of two counties. This year we remember the facts surrounding the Raid and its reaction in Warren County, and the impact it and the coming war would have on soldier and civilian, Unionist and Secessionist, free and enslaved, men and women, young and old. This year we begin remembering.

