



THE GUARDIAN

Newsletter of the Jefferson County WV Historical Society Volume VI Issue 1 January 08

The President's Message from Carmen Creamer

Dear Members, As we move into another year, I would like to reflect briefly on the past year and our goals for the New Year. The Board of Directors has met regularly for the past several months to review our financial situation and prepare a concise budget for 2008. As we reviewed our finances, it became clear that the gap between our generated revenue from membership and our expenses has widened considerably over the past five years. While our investments help to fill in the gaps, there are years when they do not generate the revenue we need to produce certain publications or pursue other projects. Our membership has dropped from close to 700 to around 475, and one quarter of these members are life members who no longer pay dues. The price of publications and the costs of mailing them have risen, and we now send out a newsletter in addition to the annual magazine. We have tried to hold the price of annual membership down to encourage new members, but have noticed that many of the other historical societies in the region have raised their annual dues, making us the best deal around.

Our goal for the New Year is to return the number of members to more than six hundred. While the Board develops a brochure and pursues other marketing strategies, I would like the members to help as well. Do you know someone new in the community who is unfamiliar with the Society? Try bringing them to one of our two annual meetings or to the picnic. Even better – do you need a gift for someone? Consider giving a membership in the Society to someone you think would enjoy learning about the society. Or how about giving the 2007 magazine, an issue which focuses on the Washington family in Jefferson County, or a DVD or one of our other publications. In the meantime, if you have any other ideas on how to increase membership, please contact me or any other member of the Board.

Carmen Creamer, President

Society Officers Elected

The results of recent elections of Society officers follow. For biographical information on each of the Society's Board Members, please visit our web site.

President.....Carmen Creamer
 Vice-President.....Jim Gibson
 Treasurer.....Barbara Gibson
 Recording Secretary..... Doug Perks
 Corresponding Secretary..... Betsy Wells
 Curator.....Hugh Voress

Emeritus Officers Named

At its November, 2007, meeting the Jefferson County Historical Society Board of Directors moved to recognize the outstanding leadership of the following four former officers by naming them Emeritus Officers.:

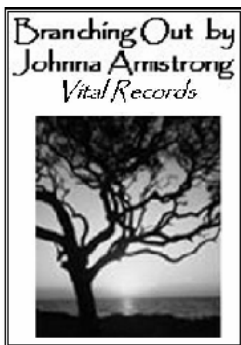
- **Mrs. John Philip Creamer, Jr.:** Director 1980-1988
- **Mrs. Florence H. Moore:** Corresponding Secretary of The Society 1980-1999; Publications Committee 1988-2000; Director 2000-2003
- **Mr. Roger J. Perry:** Vice President of The Society 1987-1999; Director 1979-1986 and 2000-2002
- **Dr. John E. Stealey, III:** President of The Society 1980-1999; Editor of *The Magazine* Volumes XLVII (1981) – LXIX (2003); Director 1979 and 2000-2003

Each *Emeritus Officer* will be recognized by The Society at its Annual Spring

Washington Family Legacy Study Proposed

A local group has developed a proposal for a study by the National Park Service to determine the viability of including several of Jefferson County's former Washington family properties within the

National Park system. The proposal development was led by Kit McGinnis of the National Park Trust, with contributions from a number of Society members. The lands to be included in the study are a portion of General George Washington's original Bullskin Plantation, his first land purchase, in 1750; Happy Retreat, established by the General's youngest brother Charles Washington, in about 1780; and the Claymont Court and Blakeley estates, built by two of his grand-nephews in the early 1800s. The proposal has received the unanimous endorsement of the Jefferson County Commissioners, the City Councils of Ranson and Charles Town, and the Harpers Ferry Town Council, and has been supported by several historical organizations.. Given the local community support and the willingness of all the property owners to endorse the proposal, a formal request will be made for legislation to authorize the study and take advantage of this unique opportunity, which would be one of the first steps in preserving four "national treasures" for the enjoyment of future generations.



Vital Records: A genealogist's Life Blood.

However you feel about the way our state was formed by being removed from Virginia in 1863, we West Virginia genealogists can all be glad that we were once a part of Virginia, because the Commonwealth was such a stickler for recordkeeping.

Starting in 1610, well before most of our ancestors were breaking ground on their cabins and fields in this county, ministers in Virginia were required by law to record all christenings, marriages and burials in registers, just as they were doing in England at the time. The downside, of course, is that few of these records survive today, but lucky for us, the habit of keeping records became engrained. Beginning in 1853, the state of Virginia began requiring the county clerks to keep the records – Virginia was one of the first states outside of New England to mandate it. As you can imagine, during the Civil War, few records were kept at all, but the law required county recordkeeping until 1896, and most counties in West Virginia kept on recording births, marriages and deaths right into 1900. On January 1, 1917, statewide registration of vital records began; however, due to a fire in 1920, most of the records from 1917 to 1920 were lost.

We are exceedingly fortunate that our state has seen fit to offer vital records online to family researchers *online and for free*. The West Virginia Vital Records Project is a joint venture of the West Virginia State Archives and the Genealogical Society of Utah. This project is ongoing and new records are being added all the time. Over the last year, a large number of Jefferson County records have been added. These records come from both county and state resources, so in some cases, you'll see the County Register entry, in some cases, the certificate itself, and in some lucky instances, both. Our County Clerks seems to have been particularly diligent – I have seen deaths of Jefferson County citizens recorded even when they happened outside the state.

Records are available from 1853 on. There is no formal timetable for records being published and I imagine that a lot has to do with how much funding is available each year, so try to be patient if your ancestor's records aren't available yet. Those of us who also do research in other states--such as New York, where vital records cost \$22 apiece--really appreciate the efforts of all the people who are involved in this project.

Just because your ancestors' vital records haven't been published by the WV Division of Culture and History yet doesn't mean you are out of luck. You can also try state and county resources. In either case, you will need to be able to show that you are related to the individual whose certificate you're requesting and pay a small fee to cover the costs for staff to research the certificate. The table on the next page shows you what date ranges are available at each location, costs involved, contacts, etc.

If you are looking for records prior to 1853, you can also try the Library of Virginia or the Family History Library. Both facilities have microfilms of vital records that still exist from before. Also check the Martinsburg Berkeley County Public Library, which has books of indexes for births, marriages and deaths from 1801 onward.

Back issues of the Magazine Wanted!!

Help keep the Society's publications' costs down!!
 Due to the increasing demand for back issues of the Society's Magazine, we will need to be reprinting several issues. Therefore, we would appreciate your returning any back issues you no longer wish to retain. Conversely, please don't hesitate to purchase any issues you'd like to have for your library. See page seven for ordering instructions.

WEST VIRGINIA VITAL RECORD SOURCES

WV Div of Culture & History
Births 1853 - 1860, 1866 - 1906
Deaths 1853 - 1855, 1860, 1866 - 1970
Marriages 1800, 1802 - 1970
Cost Free

Jefferson County
 1853 to present*
 1853 to present*
 1853 to present*
 \$5

State
 January 1, 1917 to present**
 January 1, 1917 to present**
 January 1, 1917 to present**
 \$10

Web Sites:

WVDCH: <http://www.wvculture.org/vrr>

Jefferson County:

<http://jeffersoncountyclerkwv.com>

State of West Virginia

<http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/hsc/vr/birtcert.htm>

Other Contact Info:

Historic Charles Town West Virginia

100 East Washington Street
 Charles Town, WV, 25414
 (304)728-3215

Room 165

350 Capitol Street
 Charleston, WV 25301-3701

(304) 558-2931 Fax:(304) 558-8001

Mon - Fri: 8:30am--5:00pm except holidays

Phones:

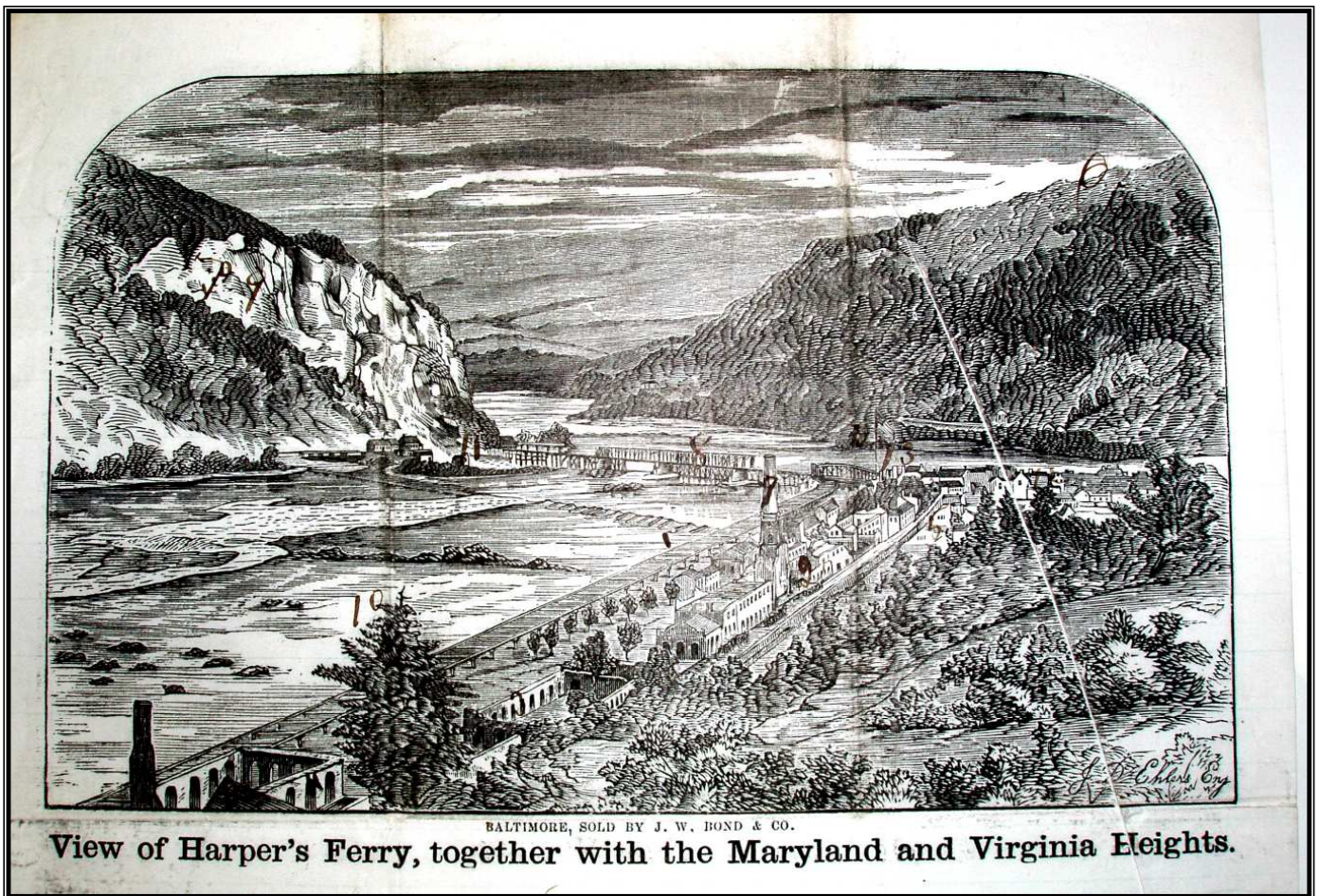
Hours:

Mon-Thur: 9:00am--5pm.

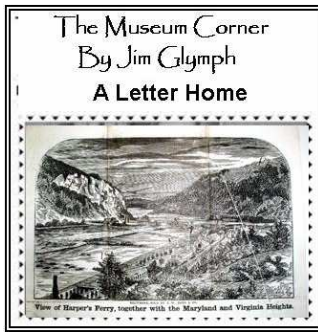
Friday: 9:00am--7pm

* Some gaps in coverage, especially during the Civil War.

** Most records from 1917-1920 were destroyed in a fire.



Lithograph of Harpers Ferry included with the Barnes Letter of 1863 (see "Museum Corner" next page)



On February 21, 1863, Private Frederic Barnes from Yonkers, New York, wrote to his Sunday school teacher from his post atop Maryland Heights above Harpers Ferry. He was a member of Company F, 6th New

York Heavy Artillery. At the time, the war was not going well for the Union.

“When I enlisted, I had a big heart, full of Patriotism, but since then I have heard and read so much about the war, how it is carried on, that it has made me so disgusted that all the Patriotism that I had is entirely gone, and the only thing that will fetch it back is for Uncle Sam to pay us, and to have a great victory. For the confidence that the people had in the government is entirely lost.”

The letter has great content and it is written on stationery with a period lithograph of Harpers Ferry (shown on previous page). Barnes numbered locations on the picture and described them in the text. For example, although not visible in this small version, number one is the pontoon bridge and number thirteen is General Kelly’s headquarters.

Barnes’ letter continues: *“I would like to see you all and I may before the first of July. I may have the good luck to get their (sic) before. Our Assistant Quartermaster is a very rough man. He has made a bet that we will all be home by the first of April or May, and it has been accepted. I am pretty well at the present time, only having a slight cold.”*

Barnes died of disease on May 15, 1863 at the age of nineteen.

The letter is on display at the Jefferson County Museum, 200 East Washington Street, Charles Town, West Virginia. <http://jeffctywvmuseum.org>

Help Us Reach You Via E-Mail

In an ongoing effort to improve communications to and between all members, if you have not already done so, **please E-mail us with your e-mail address**, indicating whether we can share it with other members. Use a subject line "My Email Address" and send your email to: info@jeffersonhistoricalwv.org

Historical Organizations and Sites in the Eastern Panhandle, by Curt Mason

We in Jefferson County sometimes lay claim to living in the most historic county in America, based on the number of "historically significant" people and events that shaped the county, as well as the many physical resources that remain: farms, homes, churches, mills, etc. A measure of the importance of history to our citizens is exemplified by the large number of Eastern Panhandle organizations and sites whose mission relates to history. The listing of such organizations which follows was compiled to stimulate communications between the organizations and to illustrate the importance that many citizens in the county place on celebrating the events, people, and historic resources of the region. Following the listing is the first in a series of articles describing the mission, goals and activities of one of the organizations listed, the Harpers Ferry Foundation. If you wish to have your organization or site featured, please email a short article to info@jeffersonhistoricalwv.org.

Note: **web sites are listed in bold font below each organization's name.**

LOCAL COMMISSIONS

(To link, preface web site entries with <http://www.>)

Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
jeffersoncountyhlc.org/

Charles Town Historic Landmarks Commission
charlestownwv.us/section.asp?section_id=40

Shepherdstown Landmarks Commission
shepherdstown.us/Historic%20Landmarks/

Historic Shepherdstown Commission
historicshepherdstown.com/

Harpers Ferry Historic Landmarks Commission
harpersferrywv.us/landmarks/

Berkeley County Landmarks Commission
bchs.org/

LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES & ASSOCIATIONS

Jefferson County Historical Society
jeffersonhistoricalwv.org

Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society
jeffctywvblackhistory.org/

LOCAL HIST. SOCIETIES & ASSOCIATIONS, (cont'd)

Carter G. Woodson Historical Association

Harpers Ferry Historical Association
harpersferryhistory.org/

Harpers Ferry Foundation
harpersferryfoundation.org/

Morgan County Historical & Genealogical Society
mchgs.com/

Berkeley County Historical Society
bchs.org/

Bunker Hill Historical Association

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION CHAPTERS

Bee Line Chapter, Daughters of American Revolution,
(Charles Town)

Pack Horse Ford Chapter, DAR (Shepherdstown)
wvdar.org/PackHorseFord/

Ye Towne of Bath Chapter, DAR (Berkeley Springs)

William Henshaw Chapter, DAR (Martinsburg)

Shenandoah Valley Chapter, DAR (Martinsburg)

Berkeley Border Guards Camp, SCV, Martinsburg

OTHER PRIVATE/SEMI-PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

George Tyler Moore Center for Study of Civil War
shepherd.edu/gtmcweb/cwcenter.htm

The Rumseian Society (Shepherdstown)
jamesrumsey.org/

The Old Station at Shepherdstown, Inc.
stationatshepherdstown.org/history.htm

Save the Charles Town Jail Committee
savethejail.org/

Civil War Round Tables
hometown.aol.com/gordonkwok/cwrtlist.html

Friends of Happy Retreat, Inc.
happyretreat.org

Henry Kyd Douglas Camp, Sons of Confederate
Veterans

Middleway Conservancy Association
middlewayconservancy.org/

Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association
battleofshepherdstown.org/

Duffields Station, Inc.

George Washington Heritage Trail
washingtonheritagetrail.org/

Civil War Discovery Trail (Martinsburg)
bchs.org/civilwar.html

Friends of the Shepherdstown Riverfront
shepherdstownriverfront.org/

The Station at Shepherdstown
stationatshepherdstown.org/about.htm

PUBLIC HISTORIC SITES and MUSEUMS

General Adam Stephen House
museumsfwv.org/museum.cfm?Museum=64

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
nps.gov/hafe/

Jefferson County Museum (Charles Town)
jeffctywvmuseum.org/

James Rumsey Steamboat Museum (Shepherdstown)
historicshepherdstown.com/rumsey_boat.htm

Historic Shepherdstown Museum
historicshepherdstown.com/museum.htm

Rumsey Monument and Cullison Park
lib.shepherdstown.wv.us/sin/rumsey.html

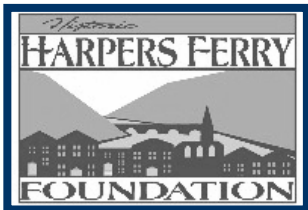
The Martinsburg Roundhouse
martinsburgroundhouse.com/

Belle Boyd House Museum (Martinsburg)
bchs.org/museums.html

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
nps.gov/choh/

National Register Historic Districts in Berkeley County
(26)

Jefferson County: County Historic Landmarks (86)
Nat'l Register Historic Districts (6)



The Harpers Ferry Historic Town Foundation is a non-profit organization focusing on preservation and beautification of the Town of Harpers Ferry, WV - "A Town that inspires citizens and visitors with its history, beauty, and hospitality."

Preservation of a 19th Century village in the 21st Century takes vision, cooperation, hard work and substantial financial resources. The Foundation works in concert with local government, the National Park Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, individuals and corporate partners to accomplish its goals:

- a professional organization run by volunteers
- preservation of at-risk historic structures in Harpers Ferry
- streetscape beautification
- support to business
- education about and promotion of Harpers Ferry

Formed in 2001 but largely dormant until Spring 2007, the Harpers Ferry Historic Town Foundation was revitalized by a group of volunteers with a vision of Harpers Ferry as *"a town which inspires citizens and visitors with its history, beauty and hospitality,"* and a shared sense that the Town's unique history would not preserve itself. The mission of the Foundation was refined: *"To plan and execute activities which focus on the historic preservation, education, and beautification of Harpers Ferry for the enjoyment and benefits of the community and its visitors."*

Among the Foundation's goals is to help the town preserve its history by establishing a fund to acquire "at risk" historically significant structures or properties as they come on the market. Once acquired, the Foundation would perform restoration, add appropriate conservation easements and covenants to the deeds and sell them back into private ownership. Other goals include streetscape beautification, infrastructure repair, stimulation of a vibrant business environment, and education and promotion through various media to attract and educate visitors.

During the past eight months, the Foundation has hired a part-time executive director, formed a board of directors, established its non-profit status, and built a web presence: www.harpersferryfoundation.org, www.VisitHarpersFerry.org, and www.harpersferry.wordpress.com

The National Park Service has provided office space in Lower Town, and many volunteers have devoted

hundreds of hours to planning and executing the Foundation's projects. The Foundation has funded promotional material and advertisements in travel/tourist publications, published the Walking Guide to Upper Town Harpers Ferry, prepared and printed an information package for new businesses, entered into negotiations for purchase of an "at risk" property, and secured funding toward this purchase. Committees were formed to improve the streetscape for Potomac Street in the Lower Town and to plan and coordinate town activities to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the John Brown Raid, which will take place in 2009.

This month, the Foundation is in the process of developing its first Annual Plan for projects and activities. Along with activities which address its mission, the organization must continue to attract funds and volunteers for operational purposes. Membership is open to all, via cash or in-kind donations, volunteer services, or gifts of stocks, bonds, or property. Although in its infancy, The Foundation members look forward to playing a dynamic role in promoting and preserving Harpers Ferry's signal importance as an historical, cultural, and geographic landmark in the American experience.

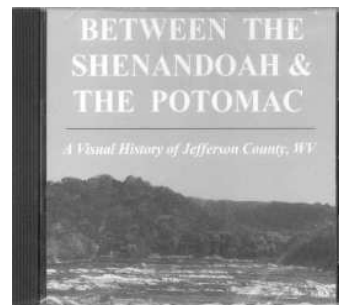
PBS Series to Feature Historic Charles Town

Oak Tree Productions, producers of "Road Trip to History," a weekly PBS television documentary series, is working with the City of Charles Town to produce one in a series of programs featuring small, charming, and historic towns in West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Each of the weekly programs helps viewers learn more about the history and culture not only of the individual communities, but of America, because so much of American history occurred in this four state area.

The production will document Charles Town's history, from the time when early native Americans lived throughout the "Valley of Virginia," through the arrival and settlement of European settlers, the fight for independence led by General George Washington, the Civil War, and the growth of the area in the 20th century. Narration will be provided by a group formed by Mayor Smith: local historians, Charles Town natives and Washington family descendants. Shooting will begin in the spring.

Completed episodes of the show are aired every Sunday evening on Channel 25. Previously aired episodes and additional information can be obtained at from Charles Town's Joe Cosentini, 304-725-2311.

JCHS PUBLICATIONS
FREE SHIPPING ON ALL ORDERS



Publications of the Society and our partners are available for purchase by mail or on our web site, which also includes brief descriptions of each of the following products. (<http://jeffersonhistoricalwv.org/thestore.html>)

- ***“Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac,”*** a DVD presenting a comprehensive illustrated history of Jefferson County, West Virginia. (\$14). In an online review, Susan Scouras of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History states:
"The Jefferson County Historical Society has produced a wonderful history of their homeland through the combined use of beautifully scenic videotape photography, interesting still photos and artists' representations of the natural landscape and resources, the man-made structures and the people themselves that comprise the past and present of Jefferson County. As the title indicates, the influence of the county's location between the Shenandoah and the Potomac Rivers is woven through both the narrative and the visual images from beginning to end. Strategically placed commentary by local experts and representatives of various agencies and organizations add support to the factual history of Jefferson County as drawn from *Historic Jefferson County*, by Millard Kessler Bushong. Excellent narration by Charlie Glaize and well-chosen background music round out the presentation of Writer/Producer Melissa Wallace."
- ***Between the Shenandoah and Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, WV. hardbound book. \$49.95***
- ***The Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society*** is mailed annually to each member and contains articles about local historical places, people, and events. Prices for purchase and shipping of back issues of the magazines are as follows:

1935-1964:	\$20/copy
1965-1994:	\$15/copy
1995-Current:	\$10/copy
- ***The Washington Homes of Jefferson County. \$10.***
- ***Prominent Men of Shepherdstown. A.D. Kenamond, 1962 \$10***
- ***Between the Shenandoah and Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County. Hard-bound \$50***
- ***Calendar & Index to Recorded Plats in Jefferson County, WV (VA) Courthouse, 1801-1901. Michael. D. Thompson \$25***
- ***Tombstone Inscriptions, Jefferson County, W. Va 1687-1980.*** Compiled by the Bee Line Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), 1981. \$22
- ***Burials in Jefferson County, West Virginia, 1978-97.*** Compiled by Hugh E. Voress, 1998, \$18

GUEST PUBLICATIONS (Prices include postage)

- ***West Virginia Encyclopedia.*** A new "must have" reference book loaded with information. **\$45**
- ***Military Operations in Jefferson County--An annotated guide to the Sons of Confederate Veterans network of Civil War Markers \$15***
- ***The Perfect Steel Trap, Harpers Ferry, 1859*** This historical novel, written by Bob O'Connor, JCHS Board member, provides eye-witness accounts of the John Brown insurrection. Read about the preparations, the raid, the trials, the executions and the aftermath and then decide: was John Brown a hero or a scoundrel? **\$23**
- ***The Virginian Who Might have Saved Lincoln*** President Lincoln's trusted friend, former law partner and heavily armed bodyguard, Ward Hill Lamon, a Summit Point, VA native, was not at Ford's Theater the night of April 14, 1865. Learn of his whereabouts that fateful evening by reading this historical novel by Bob O'Connor and consider how different history might be if Lamon had been at his post. **\$16**

Please mail a check with your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address to: The Guardian, Attention Publications, PO Box 485, Charles Town, WV 25414. Or order and pay online at:

<http://www.jeffersonhistoricalwv.org/thestore.html>

THE GUARDIAN
Jefferson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 485
Charles Town, WV 25414



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Join the Jefferson County Historical Society Today!!

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail Address _____

_____ Annual Membership (\$15)

_____ Life Membership (\$400)

Mail checks to: Membership Secretary, Jefferson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 485, Charles Town, WV 25414

Already a member? Mail next year's dues after January 1st