BROWN AND HIS SUPPORTERS CHOSE HARPERS FERRY, VIRGINIA BECAUSE IT HELD A FEDERAL ARMORY FULL OF WEAPONS. THEY HOPED TO SEIZE THE WEAPONS TO HELP THE ENSLAVED PEOPLE DEFEND THEMSELVES AND BREAK FREE FROM BONDAGE.

WHO WE WERE UP AGAINST

AT THE TIME, NEARLY FOUR MILLION PEOPLE WERE ENSLAVED IN THE UNITED STATES.ENSLAVERS USED VIOLENCE, LAWS, AND POLITICAL POWER TO MAINTAIN SLAVERY AND PROFIT FROM HUMAN BONDAGE.

MANY ABOLITIONISTS BELIEVED DIRECT ACTION WAS NECESSARY TO CONFRONT SUCH A WRETCHED SYSTEM.

THE FIGHT BACK

ON OCTOBER 16, 1859, THE ABOLITIONISTS ENTERED HARPER'S FERRY AND SEIZED THE FEDERAL ARMORY. THEY HOPED THEIR ACTIONS WOULD INSPIRE ENSLAVED PEOPLE TO RISE UP ACROSS THE SOUTH AND DEMAND FREEDOM, CREATING A BROAD MOVEMENT OF LIBERATION.

THE BATTLE

LOCAL MILITIA AND U.S. MARINES QUICKLY TOOK THE ARMORY AND LAUNCHED AN ATTACK. MANY OF THE ABOLITIONISTS WERE KILLED AS THEY RESISTED CAPTURE. THOUGH THEY WERE OUTNUMBERED, THEY REMAINED COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.

SACRIFICE AND EXECUTION

ONLY 5 ABOLITIONISTS ESCAPED. ALL OTHERS WERE CAPTURED OR KILLED. ON DECEMBER 2ND, JOHN BROWN WAS PUT ON TRIAL AND EXECUTED IN CHARLES TOWN. HE FACED EXECUTION BELIEVING THAT THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY WOULD CONTINUE BEYOND HIS OWN LIFE.

A NATION DIVIDED

THE EVENT AT HARPERS FERRY TRULY SURFACED THE NATIONAL CONFLICT OVER SLAVERY. SUPPORTERS OF SLAVERY CLAIMED THE ACTION AS A THREAT, WHILE ABOLITIONISTS SAW IT AS COURAGE AND CONVICTION FOR A BETTER LIFE AND FREEDOM. LESS THAN TWO YEARS LATER, THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN OVER THE FUTURE OF SLAVERY.

THE LEGACY LIVES ON

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, STORER COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED IN HARPERS FERRY IN 1867 TO EDUCATE NEWLY FREED BLACK STUDENTS. THE SCHOOL BECAME A PLACE OF LEARNING, COMMUNITY, AND REMEMBRANCE. ITS PRESENCE HONORED THE ABOLITIONISTS WHOSE SACRIFICE HELPED ADVANCE THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY.

IN OCTOBER 1859,

JOHN BROWN

GATHERED A SMALL MULTIRACIAL GROUP OF

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ABOLITIONISTS COMMITTED TO ENDING SLAVERY. THEY WERE ALL UNITED BY THE IDEA THAT **FREEDOM** WAS WORTH FIGHTING FOR.