1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **BROWN, JOHN, FARM AND GRAVESITE**

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: John Brown Road Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Lake Placid Vicinity: X

State: New York County: Essex Code: 31 Zip Code: 12946

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	__	Building(s):	__
Public-Local:	__	District:	X
Public-State:	X	Site:	__
Public-Federal:	__	Structure:	__
		Object:	__

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
4	1 buildings
1	__ sites
2	3 structures
3	__ objects
10	4 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Names of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signatures of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signatures of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signatures of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic	Sub:	Single Dwelling
	Recreation and Culture		Museum
	Recreation and Culture		Commemorative Monument
Current:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Museum
	Recreation and Culture		Commemorative Monument

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Other

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Stone
Walls:	Wood, weatherboard
Roof:	Wood, shake
Other:	Brick, chimneys

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The John Brown Farm and Gravesite are located in North Elba township near the Village of Lake Placid, Essex County, New York. The 270-acre farm survives with its boundaries intact from the time John Brown purchased the lot in 1849. While some development has occurred nearby, the rural, isolated setting of the farm surrounded by the high peaks of the central Adirondack mountains is substantially unchanged from the time John Brown first saw the land in 1848.

The property is operated as a museum by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation under an agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Principal features of the site include the farm with its farmhouse and outbuildings, the gravesite of John Brown and eleven of his followers, and the John Brown statue. Its present appearance reflects a number of changes and additions since New York State acquired the property in 1896 and developed the commemorative site in Brown's honor.

The Farm: (one contributing site) The original land purchased by John Brown and two of his sons was Lot 95 in Township 12 of the Old Military Tract, first surveyed in 1805. The original deed indicated 244 acres. However, the 1993 Town of North Elba tax map indicates the parcel contains 270.6 acres. Access to the rectangular parcel is from the north via John Brown Road. The northern third of the parcel contains the farm buildings, gravesite, monument, support buildings, and approximately thirty acres of open area around the buildings and on both sides of the entrance road. More of the acreage was open for pasture and cultivation during the second half of the 19th century. Most of the land beyond the area of the farmhouse is hilly and forested in second growth trees. The West Branch of the Ausable River flows diagonally through the southeast quadrant of the lot. While the farmhouse and gravesite are still in their original location, and the larger setting is substantially intact, the character of the developed portion of the property today reflects the changes made by the State since acquiring the property almost 100 years ago.

The first major change was in 1921 when the barn was moved from its original location northeast of the house to its present location south of the house. A caretaker's house (1922) and garage (1923) were built southeast of the gravesite, and in 1935, to accommodate increased vehicular traffic and to create a suitable setting for the new John Brown statue, a circular drive was created. In 1958, while the farmhouse was under restoration, a dam was built and a small pond for fire protection was created in a low area just southwest of the house.

The John Brown Farmhouse (1855): (one contributing building) The one and one-half story gable roof farmhouse is constructed with a heavy timber frame on a fieldstone foundation. It is sheathed with weatherboard siding and the roof is covered with wooden shakes. The facade has four evenly divided bays with an entrance door left of center while the rear has two windows and a door, also evenly spaced. The north gable has two evenly spaced first floor windows and the south gable contains two large attic windows set over two irregularly spaced first floor windows. The south elevation also contains two small basement lights set in the exposed foundation just below the sill. Brick interior chimneys exit the roof ridge at each gable end. The interior is divided into two principal rooms downstairs separated by a central, straight run stair to the half story sleeping loft above. The house was extensively renovated by the State Education Department in the late 1950s. Additions and changes dating from the period after Brown's death

were removed and an effort was made to approximate its appearance at the time of his funeral, using illustrations of the small cottage that had appeared in the popular press. Detailed records of the modifications have not been located, but it is clear from file memoranda and period photographs that deteriorated, later nineteenth-century exterior and interior finishes were removed and replaced, post-1859 partitions removed, and new sashes and doors installed to approximate the appearance recorded in pre-1860 illustrations.

Outbuildings: Two outbuildings associated with the farm have survived: A woodshed (one contributing structure), approximately 26' X 30,' is sited not far from the rear of the house. Its date of construction is unknown and although it has been resheathed with vertical planks and its heavy timber frame has been partially replaced, it appears to be the same structure depicted in late 19th century photographs showing a woodshed connected to the rear extensions on the main house that were removed in the 1950s. A large, 19th century barn (one contributing building) was moved in 1921 from a site north of the house to its present location south of the house and the pond. The 40' X 30' heavy timber frame, gable-roofed barn is set in an embankment on a stone-faced block foundation. The central entrance bay is reached by short ramp on the southwest elevation. The barn was moved with its frame intact, although a large shed addition has since been removed and the frame has been resheathed with horizontal weatherboards. The basement of the barn was converted to a meeting and program space. Several smaller outbuildings associated with the farm and others possibly used to accommodate tourists appear in pre-1950 photos, but none has survived except a spring house (one contributing structure) on the hillside west of the barn. To date, the State has not undertaken any systematic study of the siting and function of non-extant outbuildings.

The superintendent's cottage (one contributing building), sited several hundred feet to the east of the gravesite, was built in 1922 and the adjacent garage (one contributing building) in 1923. The three bay, center entrance house is single story, framed with light wood members, and sheathed with shingles. Since it was built, the interior spaces have been refurbished, a small, rear dormer added, and a rear open porch was enclosed. The garage was enlarged one bay in 1965. Despite the modifications, the simple bungalow style cottage survives as a distinctive period structure. Original construction drawings survive in the Historic Sites Bureau files.

The John Brown Gravesite (counted as part of the site) is located in a quarter acre reserved parcel enclosed by a gated wrought iron fence erected about 1900 to replace an earlier wooden fence. The family burial site was reserved by the Brown family when the property was first sold in 1866 and continued to be reserved when the farm was transferred to New York State in 1896. Although the parcel is reserved in perpetuity, New York State has assumed responsibility for its care and protection as the Brown family is inactive. Within the fenced area is a large rock with John Brown's name carved in the south face and two bronze tablets set into the west face. Near the base of the rock is the grave of John Brown marked with the headstone (now enclosed in copper and glass) of John Brown's grandfather, Capt. John Brown (died 1776), which had been brought to the farm from Canton, Connecticut at the request of John Brown after it had been removed from its original site and replaced by a larger stone. Below his grandfather's inscription was added, "John Brown, Born May 9, 1800, Was Executed at Charleston [sic] Va., Dec. 2, 1859." Before his execution John Brown asked that the names of his sons Oliver and Watson, who both died from the failed assault on Harpers Ferry, be added to his grandfather's headstone along with his own. The name of Frederick, who was shot dead during the Kansas uprisings in 1856, had previously been inscribed. There are two other burial plots immediately

north of John Brown's. Watson Brown is buried in the central grave where he was reinterred in 1882. In 1899, the remains of Oliver Brown and nine of John Brown's followers who died at Harpers Ferry were reinterred in the third gravesite. Their names are found on a bronze tablet on the large rock a few feet away.

Just outside the iron fence at the southeast corner of the enclosure is the Donor's Monument (one contributing object), a large granite marker inscribed with the names of twenty members of the John Brown Association who deeded the farm to the State of New York in 1896. A flagpole was also erected in 1896, but is no longer extant. The current flagpole (one contributing object) sited between the house and the road was erected in the mid-1930s.

North of the gravesite is the John Brown statue (one contributing object), erected in 1935 as the central feature of a landscaped circular drive. The large bronze depicting a nurturing and protective John Brown with his arm around a black youth was sculpted by Joseph P. Pollia (1893-1954) and cast by the Roman Bronze Works of New York City. It was dedicated May 9, 1935 to John Brown and his comrades by the John Brown Memorial Association, Inc. The names of the Monument Commission members are cast in the base along with the dedication. The slightly larger than life bronze is set on an unornamented granite base marked with his name and the dates 1800-1859. The statue faces north, perhaps symbolizing John Brown's efforts to move free blacks north, away from servitude and to nurture them in the new and harsh land. The circular area around the statue was graded and landscaped under the direction of the State Conservation Department. Labor was provided by Company 257 of Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-71 and the shrubs were provided by the Lake Placid Club. The original rustic wood fencing has been removed, but some plantings and portions of the stone walkways from the original design survive.

Since the acquisition of the John Brown farm by the State, various changes and necessary improvements were made in an attempt to restore the farmstead to an appearance more akin to what Brown himself had experienced during his residence while at the same time providing amenities to better serve the increasingly large number of visitors that arrived by automobile. Additions to the house were removed, the later 19th century barn moved away from the entrance road where it interfered with the visitor approach, and more workable access roads and paths installed. Further, the harsh winters had taken their toll on the exterior surfaces, necessitating new siding and roof surfaces. Despite the changes, the three dispersed farmstead buildings that remain in the open agricultural landscape cumulatively communicate the character of the farm as John Brown had known it. Changes made in the 1950s were intended

to more accurately portray the farmstead as the small and humble wilderness home that Brown and his family accepted as part of their mission to help free blacks. Simultaneously, the State maintained the formal and duly respectful public monument at the gravesite. Although, individual buildings have received varying degrees of replacement fabric, the district has survived with its commemorative memorial character substantially intact.

Non-historic features on the property are each small in scale. These include a Clivus Multrum (one noncontributing building) composting toilet sited at the edge of the drive and hidden by evergreen trees, several Metalphoto interpretive signs, recently installed wooden rail fences (two noncontributing structures) near the pond and barn, and the concrete dam (one noncontributing structure) at the south end of the pond.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B X C__ D__
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F X G__
NHL Criteria:	1, 2
NHL Criteria Exception:	7
NHL Theme(s):	II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements 2. reform movements IV. Shaping the Political Landscape 1. Political ideas, cultures, theories
Areas of Significance:	Social History, Ethnic History--Black
Period(s) of Significance:	1849-1947
Significant Dates:	1849, 1855, 1859, 1896, 1935
Significant Person(s):	Brown, John
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	N/A
Historic Contexts:	XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements D. Abolitionism

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

SUMMARY

The John Brown Farm is significant as for its association with and as a commemorative memorial to the famous and controversial abolitionist John Brown, who came to the remote Adirondacks in 1849 with his family to help a struggling community of free black settlers. It was from this farm that Brown set forth to the western territories and then to Harpers Ferry with his plan to exorcize the evils of slavery from America through armed confrontation. Brown called North Elba home during the last ten years of his life as he, his sons, and a few dedicated followers took on the forces of slave interests in an armed struggle that created one of the most enduring historical legends in the nation's history.

INTRODUCTION

John Brown's highly publicized personal struggle against the oppression of black Americans and the story of family sacrifice had only just begun when he was hanged for treason and murder after his failed attempt to incite a slave revolt at Harpers Ferry. The legend of a selfless and fearless crusader and the family he had called upon to share the struggle captured the attention of virtually all Americans, fueled by the fascination of the popular press, admiring biographers and poets, and a clergy that found Brown's righteousness and faith useful in sermons. Few Americans in the two generations after the Civil War did not encounter in schools, churches, books, and magazines the story of John Brown's courage and sacrifice. Many drew inspiration from the widely publicized struggles of his shattered and dispersed family. For those who could make the journey to North Elba, Brown's simple gravesite along with those of some of his followers, including two of his sons, with his modest farmstead surrounded by the rugged and dramatic high peaks of the Adirondacks, provided a moving and cherished experience.

Few visitors would not be inspired by the pointed message of the setting and the serenity that came from the graves of men who died violent deaths for an honorable cause. Over the last one hundred years the farm and his gravesite, as touchstones of conscience, have gained national significance as a commemorative memorial to Brown, his followers, and to the abolitionist struggle that gripped the nation in the three decades before the Civil War.

Brown's vision was idealistic and humanitarian in nature as he came to North Elba to help a small but growing community of free blacks establish new beginnings on desolate and undeveloped lands provided by Gerrit Smith, a wealthy abolitionist from central New York. Brown also was looking for change as his wool brokerage business in Springfield, Massachusetts had collapsed. Perhaps frustrated by the limited success of the Underground Railroad, which had taken much of his time while in Springfield, and growing increasingly impatient with the stalemated public debate on the issue of abolition, Brown appears to have concluded that more decisive action was needed. Brown learned of Gerrit Smith's widely publicized plan for settling free blacks in the Adirondacks and visited Smith at his estate near Syracuse, New York. Enthused with Smith's plan and seeing a role for himself in the endeavor, he traveled to the central Adirondacks to view the opportunities for himself. Soon after, he bought Great Lot 95 from Smith and committed himself and his family to his wilderness farm and the needs of his struggling free black neighbors. But Brown was not retreating to the wilderness. The move to North Elba and the wilderness farm was a turning point in what to then had been the unremarkable life of John Brown and it turned out to be both the practical and symbolic beginning of a larger destiny he surely did not imagine.

Pressed by the seemingly relentless spread of slavery's evils, Brown soon set aside his Adirondack experiment as well as family concerns and began from that remote mountain outpost a journey that placed him at center stage in the evolving national debate over slavery, first as crusader, then as prophet, and finally as martyr.

Whatever John Brown may have first thought about his purposes and what would come of his efforts in the Adirondacks, his destiny was much larger than that of a protective and kindly neighbor atoning for the sins of slavery. It was as a soldier and prophet willing to martyr himself for the cause of the abolitionists. Leaving his family to develop his farm and help the small community of black settlers, John Brown and his sons devoted most of their time in the decade before the Civil War traveling throughout the East and the Midwest raising money and seeking support for the increasingly pressing cause of abolition and his personal vision of slave insurrection. The climax of his abolitionist crusade came when he and a devoted band of twenty-one followers attacked and briefly held the United States Arsenal at Harpers Ferry on October 16, 1859 with the intent of capturing arms and inciting slave insurrection. Brown's bold act captured the attention of the nation. But the slaves did not respond and two days later, with eleven of his band killed and himself wounded, Brown was captured by U.S. Marines under the command of Robert E. Lee. He was tried by the Commonwealth of Virginia for treason and murder and executed December 2, 1859.

John Brown's widow brought his remains back to North Elba as he had requested, and they were interred at the base of a large rock not far from the house. From the day of his burial, December 8, 1859, the gravesite became sacred ground to the millions of Americans who saw his efforts to aid the oppressed and his willingness to do battle with the oppressors without fear of death as worthy of perpetual honor. The saga of his struggle to free the oppressed, the drama and tragedy of his perceived martyrdom, and the charismatic character of the man himself, soon captured the interest of millions of Americans. With the help of some America's foremost writers, Brown achieved mythic proportions as a sturdy, single-minded man who feared only God along his march to destroy the institution of slavery.

The Brown family soon moved away and the farm was sold, but visitors continued to come and the fascination with the John Brown legend and the place where it all began never subsided. In 1870, the farm was purchased by a group of citizens led by the noted journalist and lecturer, Kate Field, marking the beginning of efforts to conserve and protect the gravesite and farm. The group deeded the property over to the State of New York in 1896. Although the property became the responsibility of the State and various improvements were made to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors and pilgrims, private interest in promoting the memory of John Brown did not end. In 1922, a new John Brown Memorial Association was formed and money was raised for a John Brown statue. The memorial statue was erected and dedicated in 1935 at a ceremony attended by more than 2000 people.

It was from that humble farm in a remote wilderness that Brown began the journey to martyrdom and it is the farm, more than any other site associated with John Brown that recalls his remarkable accomplishment. From the time of his hanging, the site has received hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and visitors seeking both the man, the story, and the place where his journey into history began. Thus, the farm and gravesite are also significant as a manifestation of the efforts, both private and public, to create a suitable memorial to the man many felt had forced the nation to confront and vanquish the disgrace of slavery and its injustice. The creation of a

vital and sustainable memorial to emancipation reflected the need of many Americans to remain connected to the ideal of God given equality and to maintain vigilance against those who might obscure or obstruct it. The accomplishments of the first John Brown Association to acquire the farm and gravesite for perpetual stewardship and the successful efforts of the later John Brown Memorial Association during the 1920s and 1930s to enhance the memorial and bring thousands of black American pilgrims to the site have resulted in a commemorative property that has borne witness to multitudes who came as free men, grateful for the martyrdom of John Brown.

BACKGROUND

John Brown's journey to North Elba to help the black settlers of "Timbuctoo" as well as his journey to the gallows no doubt began early in life when his character and childhood experiences blended with the strong Calvinist and abolitionist mind set of his family. Although speculation about how, why, and when Brown began his almost relentless path to martyrdom has filled many pages in his numerous biographies, the evidence is clear that like the nation itself, Brown's struggle with the question of slavery started as a moral debate and evolved into a raging crisis that could not be controlled. It culminated for Brown in the dramatic raid on the Harpers Ferry federal arsenal that brought him and his followers to the gallows.

John Brown was born May 9, 1800 in Torrington, Connecticut to Owen and Ruth Mills Brown. The ancestors of both his parents had arrived in New England at least 150 years earlier, placing John in the long continuum of Yankee Calvinist stock. In 1805 Owen Brown moved his family to the recently opened Western Reserve. There the young John Brown experienced the harsh and demanding life of the frontier, learning the tanning trade of his father and the mixed husbandry agricultural practices that he would ultimately carry to the rugged wilderness of the central Adirondacks and share with the black settlers there who faced the same, if not more difficult, challenge. The Western Reserve was mostly settled by New Englanders who brought with them their Calvinist traditions, and Owen Brown was to become a leader in the establishment of frontier churches and abolitionist activities.[1]

At the age of sixteen Brown traveled back to the East to study for the ministry, but lack of funds and an eye condition forced him to give up his calling and return to Ohio. He took up his father's trade as tanner and married Dianthe Lusk in 1820 who bore seven children, five of whom lived to maturity. The family moved to Richmond, Pennsylvania in 1826 where he started a tannery business. Dianthe died in 1832 and the following year he married Mary Ann Day. Mary bore him thirteen children, with six living to maturity. In the years between 1835 and 1846 he pursued a variety of trades and businesses including farming, tanning, surveying, land speculation and stock raising.

Whatever the youthful Brown may have thought of the oppression he himself witnessed on the frontier or what he imagined it to be in the rural south, the first documented reference to his intentions to personally help the oppressed appeared in 1834 when he wrote to his brother that he and his wife were seeking a black boy to bring up as one of the family. He had hoped to obtain a boy from a slave holder willing to release his property free of charge or even buy a young slave

[1]Richard O. Boyer, *The Legend of John Brown* (New York, 1973), p. 183.

if they had to.[2] Although nothing came of this idea, Brown's unflinching commitment to helping runaway slaves and free blacks became central to all his activities until his death. Brown's abolitionist fervor, however, was not limited to himself as he insisted that his wife and children commit to the cause and that they too prepare themselves for sacrifices and hardship.

Sympathy for the Abolitionist cause was growing in the northern states, and John Brown was destined to play an important part in both the debate and the events that consumed the nation. After the highly publicized 1837 slaying of Rev. Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist publisher in Alton, Illinois, galvanized the nation and convinced many on both sides of the inevitability of armed conflict, Brown's personal outrage led him to rise at the end of a prayer meeting only two weeks later and publicly pledge that he would devote his life to the overthrow of slavery.[3] The fruits of this pledge did not become manifest for almost another decade as Brown struggled with supporting a large family and a variety of Ohio and Pennsylvania business ventures in a volatile and speculative economy that for him often proved to be more vexing than productive.

In 1846 Brown formed a wool brokerage partnership with Col. Simon Perkins and in 1847 moved his family to Springfield, Massachusetts. The partnership and the brokerage business, like many of his business ventures, caused Brown much frustration and made little money. But in Springfield, also, despite the distractions of the failing business, Brown never lost sight of his commitment to an aggressive abolitionist agenda. Springfield was, like his earlier frontier community in Ohio, a hot bed of abolitionist activity and a center of Underground Railroad operations. There as in the past, Brown never let an opportunity pass to take part in the "railroad business."[4]

In 1848, after learning about the wealthy New York abolitionist Gerrit Smith's offer to give over one hundred thousand acres of Adirondack land, mostly in forty acre parcels, to any blacks willing to become landowners and take up farming, Brown was intrigued enough at the possibility of joining Smith's effort to leave his wool business behind and travel to meet with Smith at his large estate in Peterboro in Madison County, New York. Brown had visited one of the struggling Adirondack settlements, Timbuctoo, briefly in the fall of 1848. The two discussed the prospects of settling blacks on land poorly suited for agriculture and Brown offered to settle among Smith's colonists, clearing land of his own and showing them how it was to be done. In the spring of 1849, after a disastrous business trip to England for his wool brokerage business, Brown moved his wife and seven children to a rented farm near the recently settled blacks in Essex County, just a short distance from Lot 95.

The first black settlers has come to North Elba sometime in late 1847. By 1850, the bulk of Timbuctoo settlers had arrived, about thirty-three in all according to census records, but there may have been as many as sixty.[5] Brown and his family were welcomed as the struggling blacks

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[2]Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom*, (New York, 1974), p. 16.

[3] Quarles, p. 18.

[4] Quarles, p. 18.

[5] Maurice O'Brien, "Timbuctoo: An Attempt at Negro Settlement in the Adirondacks," (Unpublished report for NYS Division for Historic Preservation, 1977) p. 8.

needed friends, support, and inspiration. Committed to the task at hand, and perhaps to his family's future as well, Brown and two of his sons, Jason and Owen, bought Lot 95 of Township 12, the parcel that survives today as John Brown's Farm, for $244. Besides the freely given advice and hands-on support, Brown saw himself as a leader and teacher who also was responsible for their souls, urging them to "set an example in all things," rising above the conduct of their white neighbors.[6] At first glance, the gesture to help blacks in North Elba start a new life is only one of many attempts Brown made to succor the victims of oppression. But the move to North Elba and the symbolic importance of his gesture have contributed much to the complex legend surrounding the man and his deeds. The surviving farm is associated with Brown's widely reported kindness and support given to Gerrit Smith's settlers and provides both tangible as well as symbolic evidence of Brown's personal commitment to aid free blacks in their quest for equality.

Brown's financial burdens continued, soon forcing him to leave North Elba with his wife and young children for Akron, Ohio in March of 1851, leaving his daughter Ruth and her new husband Henry Thompson to continue with the rented farm and begin developing Lot 95 as time and resources permitted. The family returned to North Elba in June of 1855, almost two years after having made the decision to return.[7] That year, Brown's son-in-law, Henry Thompson, a carpenter by trade, built the farmhouse that Brown moved into upon his return. But Brown had hardly time to settle in before he left again in August, this time for Kansas after receiving letters from his homesteading sons requesting men and arms to help in the struggle against pro-slavery forces that were threatening "Free-soilers." This marked the beginning of Brown's armed struggle against the pro-slavery forces that ultimately cost him and three of his son's, Watson, Oliver, and Frederick, their lives. It also brought the name John Brown to the front pages of America's newspapers when after arriving in Kansas, he led a raid on pro-slavery settlers to avenge the deaths of anti-slavery homesteaders, capturing five men and executing them on the banks of the Pottawatomie River.

The nation's eyes were now upon John Brown as he stepped to center stage in the Kansas uprisings, but few, if any, knew what additional deeds could come forth from his growing rage and his promise to bring down the forces of oppression. He returned to Ohio from Kansas a famous if somewhat enigmatic zealot who now gave clear evidence that he was willing to put his life and the lives of his family at stake in the increasingly bloody fight against slavery. After 1855, John Brown returned to North Elba for only six brief visits before his death in 1859, leaving the black settlers of North Elba in a declining community that ultimately did not survive the harsh climate and isolated economy. Their numbers had already declined to not more than ten families by 1855.[8] Seeing the black settlers fail to prosper and their numbers decline must have been a bitter pill for Brown to swallow. But there was little more he could do. For John Brown, the experiment and hope of Gerrit Smith's gesture to invest free blacks in land was replaced by the more pressing drama being played out on the larger stage of the territories west of the Mississippi. It was there that the struggle between pro- and anti-slavery forces turned bloody, and in the minds of many, constituted the prelude to the Civil War. Perhaps it was the

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[6] New York *Post*, December 20, 1859.

[7] F. B. Sanborn, *The Life and Letters of John Brown*, (Boston, 1885) , p. 155.

[8] Quarles, p. 28.

growing evidence of the futility of re-settlement of blacks as a tool to end slavery when held up to the successes in Kansas that finally convinced him to move forth with his plan to incite a black insurrection and start a guerilla war. With his family settled in North Elba, Brown was transformed from a man constrained by circumstances of time and place to the "historic John Brown, the John Brown whose sense of mission would combine with increasing crisis to make him irresistible."[9] The farm at North Elba and a life dedicated to supporting his family and his black brethren receded to the background for a moment in time, only to return after his death as the sacred ground of a buried martyr and as evidence, symbolic and real, of one extraordinary man's vision for mankind and his dedication and sacrifice to help the oppressed find dignity and peace.

The story of John Brown's ill-fated raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry is well known to generations of Americans who have been easily awed by his courageous if not fanatical confrontation with the nation's own army. Although the attack was doomed to military failure by almost any measure, the sheer force of Brown's single-mindedness ignited the fuel of guilt, shame, will, and frustration that had long simmered in the American soul. When John Brown was hanged for his crime, the nation did not rest easy. It was not an obscure zealot that was executed, but a man whose deeds would measure up and whose being could now, on close scrutiny, be reconstructed and made durable as the substance of myth. "If public sentiment in the North in 1859 was such that John Brown could not doubt that he was winning some measure of success by being hanged for treason... none knew better than he that it had taken more than artlessness to achieve. Rather than the angelic, it had required a willingness to kill for victory, an aptitude for building fame and power on his Kansas battles of 1856, an ability to raise cash through those euphemisms for war which stirred without disturbing. After all, unusual talents are required to make a success of being hanged. Simple innocence, he had found, was not enough to raise a secret army, however small, for an insurrectionary war, however holy."[10]

The events of Brown's life and the details of his character, up until 1855, were known only to his family and a few abolitionists and business associates. And while many prominent Americans vigorously debated and anguished over the great dilemma of slavery in open forums, Brown was preparing for the day when he could anguish or debate no more and take up the sword for the cause, something that the abolitionist clergy and journalists were reluctant to do. Brown created his place in history as an uncommon man who acted out his conscience without fear and against overwhelming odds.

Just prior to his execution, Brown wrote these words. "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be washed away except with blood; I had, as I now think, vainly flattered myself that without much bloodshed it might be done." To those Americans who vigorously opposed slavery, Brown was a martyr, but to many more Americans his words were an uncomfortable prophesy. Within three years the nation erupted into civil war and would necessarily turn to the work of resolving the issue of slavery and secession on numerous bloody battlefields. But the legend of John Brown had been born and, while great events would often distract the nation over the next one hundred years, the legend would grow

[9] Boyer, p. 559.

[10] Boyer, p. 4.

and the gravesite would remain sacred ground.

The legend of John Brown and the extraordinary attention he received from the drama of Harpers Ferry and its aftermath was not entirely his own doing. "Long years of conflict over slavery were necessary before it seemed to many in the South as if John Brown were the embodiment of all they wished to kill in the North; before thousands in the North were to see something of themselves standing beside John Brown when he mounted the gallows.[11] John Brown did not shirk the gallows. As the public apprehensively awaited his execution, following the widely published accounts of both Brown's and the nation's dilemma, it was Brown who was unwavering. Eloquent in his letters and speech, he reminded many of the great martyrs of history. He "so impressed thousands in the North that his body had scarcely been cut from the gallows before many of the foremost figures above the Ohio were declaring his story would live forever in American history.[12]

One of John Brown's last wishes was that his body be taken back to his farm in North Elba and buried beneath the headstone of his grandfather. His widow Mary, with the eyes of the nation upon her, retrieved the body from the Virginia gallows and accompanied it back to North Elba. It was there at the base of a huge isolated stone left long ago left by a glacier that his body now lies, the sacred centerpiece to the commemorative monument that grew as generation after generation sought to honor and reflect upon a man whose public confrontation with evil and the forces of oppression had changed America. The sense that the grave would be a lasting monument with its own purpose was immediately recognized. Just a day after interment, Frances Ellen Watkins, a black woman, wrote to Mrs. Brown telling her that her husband's grave would be "a new alter where man may record more earnest vows against slavery."[13] Indeed, sympathy for Mrs. Brown's financial condition as well as for the sacrifice of Brown himself was widespread among blacks throughout the North and Canada, bringing her much needed cash and widespread support. Large numbers of blacks had gathered along with whites to view the coffin and procession as it made the five-day journey from Virginia to North Elba via Philadelphia, New York City, and Vermont. At his burial service, "quite one half of the company" were blacks, with the singing done by "colored people chiefly."[14] Throughout the North and Canada, free blacks joined in memorial services and listened to eulogies, beginning a long tradition of reverence toward the grave and the farm where Brown had come to settle and share the burdens of pioneering with his black brethren.

Though Brown's family stayed on in North Elba for only a few years before selling the farm and leaving the inhospitable climate of the Adirondacks in 1863 for the valleys of California, the gravesite on a quarter acre was reserved by the family. It was frequently visited by curious tourists and seasonal residents who were beginning to turn the once remote Adirondacks into a summer playground. Though it is unclear how many blacks were able to make the long trek to the farm, there was always great interest among blacks in honoring Brown, not just as a martyr to

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[11] Quarles, p. 16.

[12] Boyer, p. 22.

[13] Quarles, p. 133.

[14] Quarles, p. 172.

their cause, but for the clear evidence that he had embraced blacks as equals throughout his life. While most blacks knew well enough that ending slavery would not end oppression and exclusion, they also knew that John Brown had stood up not only for freedom, but for equality of being, both spiritually and legally. To most white Americans of the time, Brown was a fanatical abolitionist with uncommon determination. To blacks, he evidenced, as well, something even more important; a man who did not see color.

As the events associated with the abolitionist struggle receded over time and the nation turned to rebuilding in the post Civil War era, the farm and gravesite attracted the interest of a number of prominent individuals who, led by the popular lecturer-journalist Kate Field, purchased the farm in 1870 and formed the John Brown Association. The Association cared for the property and kept it accessible to visitors and pilgrims until 1896, the year of Kate Field's death, when it was transferred to the State of New York. Interest grew among descendants and admirers of John Brown in bringing the remains of his fellow conspirators to the memorial site and in 1882 the body of Watson Brown was finally retrieved from the Winchester Medical College in Virginia and buried by the side of his father. In 1899, an ardent Brown admirer, Dr. Thomas Featherstonhaugh, located in Virginia the bodies of eight of Brown's followers, including his son Oliver who had been killed in the raid, and had them brought to the gravesite and reinterred in a mass grave, just as they had been found. Two other followers, who had been buried in New Jersey, were also disinterred and reburied with their comrades. Their names are listed on a bronze plaque mounted on the boulder a few feet away.

The takeover of the property by the State Fisheries, Game, and Forests Commission resulted in changes that responded to projections of increased visitation, enhanced the visitor's experience, and provided for permanent stewardship of the property. A substantial wrought iron fence was erected about 1900 to protect the grave and give it a more formal appearance. In 1921, the barn was relocated to a less conspicuous site further away from the entrance road and in 1922 a caretaker's cottage was built to accommodate year round staff at the site. The early Twenties found interest in the gravesite and John Brown's legacy growing among prominent black Americans. In 1922, Dr. J. Max Barber, a Philadelphia dentist, and one of the founders of the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, visited the farm to lay a wreath at the gravesite in the name of black Americans. The following year a pilgrimage committee was formed which later evolved into a new John Brown Memorial Association with early chapters in Philadelphia, New York City, and Brooklyn. The Association formed a monument commission with Barber as the president and began to raise money for a bronze memorial and, despite the Depression, was able to raise $5000 for the purpose by 1934. The New York City sculptor, Joseph Pollia, was commissioned for the design and on May 9, 1935, an eight-foot-high bronze likeness of John Brown with his protective arm around a black boy was finally dedicated, seventy-six years after Brown had departed his North Elba farm to take up arms against pro-slavery forces in Kansas.

The Association continued to sponsor annual pilgrimages to the farm and gravesite. In 1941, they placed a bronze and glass enclosure over the marble headstone to protect it from weather and souvenir hunters, and later, in 1946, in honor of the contribution of the Brown family wives and daughters, a memorial plaque was installed on the boulder alongside the tablet listing the names of Brown's reinterred male comrades. Few who knew the entire story of John Brown's struggle to free the oppressed could fail to see that it required extraordinary sacrifices from his family, and much sympathy went out, not only to the sons who fell in battle, but to the wives and

daughters who were left to carry the burdens of child rearing and pioneer life alone if not as widows.

The property was transferred to the jurisdiction of the State Education Department in 1953. Between 1957 and 1959 the farmhouse was "returned" to its 1859 appearance. Additions and porches were removed and a comprehensive refurbishment undertaken. The interior was furnished with mid-nineteenth century artifacts, only a few of which had any direct association with Brown or his family. In 1966, property management was taken over by the New York State Historic Trust which, in 1972, passed responsibility to the newly created New York State Parks and Recreation Department. The Department, now known as the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, continues to operate the facility under a 1975 Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Environmental Conservation, which retains title to the land.

The John Brown Farm and Gravesite is nationally significant for its association with a man whose deeds and martyrdom to this day remain etched in the conscience of the nation, a man who "roused millions from the moral stupor that had possessed the country." These were the words of Col. Lyman at ceremonies marking New York's acceptance of the commemorative site in 1896. By that time the legend of John Brown was well established, built on clear evidence in deeds and words of an unequivocal egalitarianism that from Brown's youth had served as evidence and inspiration to generations of blacks and whites that racial differences could be overcome. As J. Max Barber noted in his 1935 address at the unveiling of the John Brown Monument, the site is "our signpost to the generations to come. They must know by this that we reverenced heroism for justice and that we were grateful for martyrdom for freedom."

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Sources available for the study of John Brown and the events surrounding his life are extensive, both manuscript material and published works, including fifteen biographies. The following is a short list of the most useful and dependable published sources used in preparation of this designation report. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation maintains its own research files at the Historic Sites Bureau in Waterford, New York. The bureau files mainly concern the history of New York State's management of the property since it was acquired in 1896, although there is scant material for the pre-World War II period.

Boyer, Richard O. *The Legend of John Brown: A Biography and a History*, (New York, 1973).

Oates, Stephen B. *To Purge This Land With Blood*, (Amherst, 1970).

Quarles, Benjamin. *Allies for Freedom*, (New York, 1974).

Sanborn, F. B. *The Life and Letters of John Brown*. (Boston, 1885).

Villard, Oswald Garrison. *John Brown, 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After*. (New York, 1910).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # NY-245
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office (Historic Sites Bureau)
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 270.6 (according to local tax map)

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	581500	4900580
B	18	582400	4900580
C	18	582520	4899200
D	18	581540	4899200

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the designated property is historically known as Lot 95 in Township 12 of the Old Military Tract, first surveyed in 1805. The lot is still referred to as Lot 95 on the town of North Elba 1993 tax map with the acreage now calculated as 270.6

Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses all of those lands purchased by John Brown and two of his sons in 1849. There have been no subdivisions or additions to the parcel since it was purchased and developed. Hence, the nominated property represents an historically intact entity encompassing the original farm, the gravesite, and the commemorative features of the property.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Lawrence E. Gobrecht
Historic Preservation Program Analyst
NYSOPRHP
Telephone: 518-237-8643 ext. 214

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