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For Immediate Release:

## **Markers Interpret Last Confederate Incursion and Ransom of Hagerstown, 145 Years Ago**

Skirmishes and Cavalry Battles Happened Here in 1864

(HAGERSTOWN, Md.) – The Ransom of Hagerstown is often overshadowed by other large-scale Civil War events that took place in the area, such as the Battle of Antietam and John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry. But historical markers in downtown Hagerstown, erected by the Maryland Heritage Area, provide interpretation to this important historical event that took place 145 years ago this month.

On July 6, 1864, Confederate General Jubal Early sent Brigadier General John McCausland into Hagerstown to impose a ransom of \$20,000 and a large amount of supplies, in retribution for lands destroyed and sacked in Virginia by Federal Troops. To save the town from being burned, several banks in Hagerstown provided the necessary funds while business owners and townspeople relinquished clothing and other goods. According to historians, Hagerstown was lucky that the ransom was only \$20,000, and some chalk up the amount to a misprinted order, it was originally to be \$200,000.

One of the two markers is located on the side of the Washington County Courthouse, at the intersection of West Washington Street and Summit Avenue. The inscription describes the ransom, when the current courthouse was built, and explains that the former courthouse was used as a field hospital following the Battle of Antietam in 1862. The marker has an illustration showing the old Courthouse and portraits of McCausland and local staff officer of Stonewall Jackson, Colonel Henry Kyd Douglas, who later practiced law on West Washington Street.

The second marker is located at 35 West Washington Street and depicts a photo of the Hagerstown Bank, circa 1935, before it was demolished in the mid- 1930's. The bank's Board of Directors, led by President James Dixon Roman, also pictured on the marker, took the lead in gathering the ransom money to spare the town from being burned by the Confederates.

According to one of the new Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area markers: "On July 29, 1864, elements of Cole's Maryland Cavalry (Union) battled Brigadier General John C. Vaughn's cavalry brigade of Early's command for three hours in the streets of Hagerstown. By late afternoon, the Marylanders retreated north to Greencastle. That evening, the Confederates struck the Franklin Railroad Yards in Hagerstown's West End, broke into the shops, looted and burned the warehouses and captured and destroyed a train filled with supplies intended for the Union forces. These actions on July 29th were diversionary movements directed by Early to cover General John McCausland's raid on Chambersburg. Confederate diversions continued for the next week. On August 5, 1864, elements of General Early's command occupied Washington County and Hagerstown in what was the last substantial Confederate incursion north of the Potomac River."

Other local towns were ransomed, including Frederick for \$200,000. Confederate troops crossed through Washington County, and ransomed Chambersburg. The town was unable to pay the ransom, and was burned on July 30th. The Confederate forces later crossed back through Maryland, disrupted railroads and destroying bridges.

The City of Hagerstown received grant funding from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (part

of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority) for the design and installation of the new markers. "As chairman of the Washington County Delegation to the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, I'm very pleased that these new markers tell the story of what happened here during the Civil War, especially what happened 145 years ago this month," said Tom Riford, the president and CEO of the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

For more information about Hagerstown-Washington County, see: [www.marylandmemories.com](http://www.marylandmemories.com). Washington County is part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area ([www.heartofthecivilwar.org](http://www.heartofthecivilwar.org)), and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (<http://hallowedground.org>).

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