

## **Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission Work Group 3: EDUCATION**

**October 9, 2008, Petersburg**

The Education Work Group resumed its meetings for the 2008 legislative interim on October 9, 2008, at Virginia State University in Petersburg, with the convening of its ad hoc subcommittee in the morning, followed by the full work group meeting in the afternoon.

### **Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meeting**

At the request of Chairwoman Mamie Locke, the meeting began with a summary of the Education work group's November 26, 2007, meeting, at which members identified numerous educational programs, events, and activities that would meet the charge given by the Commission, and at which the subcommittee was appointed and charged to address and recommend ways to resolve the concerns expressed by work group members.

The staff apprised the subcommittee that the work group agreed, given the administrative and fiscal realities of the day-to-day operation of public and private schools, the time constraints on teachers and administrators, and the varying schedules of institutions of higher education, that classroom teachers and teacher education programs would be better served with a "one-stop shopping" compendium which would include supplemental instructional aids and materials related to the American Civil War that have been reviewed for quality, relevancy, balance, and consistency with the message of the sesquicentennial and the Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies and other related subjects. To maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness, the compendium would be distributed in a "one-time mailing" to all public and private schools, and approved teacher education programs in the Commonwealth. However, in determining the contents of the compendium and discussing other educational initiatives for the commemoration, the work group expressed concerns relating to the divergent academic approaches to teaching American Civil War history and the implications of the respective methodologies on the "message" of the commemoration and for achieving the Commission's stated goals of balance, inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity. To address the aforementioned and other concerns, an ad hoc subcommittee was appointed to review the various methodologies for teaching American Civil War history, address the "hard and controversial" issues of the Civil War and its legacy that teachers may encounter in the classroom and options for dealing with the controversies in the classroom, review the "message" of the educational DVD under production for its consistency with the "message" of the sesquicentennial and the revised Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies, and recommend alternatives to resolve these concerns.

### **Academic Approaches to Teaching American Civil War History**

Dr. Stephen Rockenbach, assistant professor and civil war historian at Virginia State University, discussed the academic approaches or instructional methodologies to teaching civil war history: narrative, thematic, and community history and micro-historical.

**Narrative**—a cohesive start to finish story of political issues and battles. The sources primarily used in this approach are major figures and personalities, maps, timelines, and battles. It is the easiest approach to steer to one perspective. Its major advantage is that it is easy to convey with a specific beginning, middle, and end. Its major disadvantage is it involves generalizations.

**Thematic**—is an exploration of themes that frame experiences: gender, race, class, culture, etc. The sources utilized by this approach are quotes from one particular perspective and primary sources on one them. The major advantage of this approach is it provides an understanding of motivations, and it is more inclusive. Its major disadvantage is it assumes the student has a grasp of the narrative.

**Community History and Micro-Historical**—seeks to understand individual experiences, decisions, and perspectives. It relies upon diaries, letters, memoirs from various perspectives, and historical evidence from before and after the war as primary sources to frame perspectives. It tests generalizations and deals with real people. This approach is more time consuming; however, students receive a better understanding of the war and its complexities. This approach is the most inclusive. Its major advantage is it allows a real understanding of the complexities of the era. Its major disadvantage is it does not always coincide with the narrative approach nor is it always regionally specific.

A discussion ensued following Dr. Rockenbach's presentation concerning which of the methodologies were the most appropriate for teaching certain aspects of the American Civil War relative to student maturity and proficiency, and grade level. At the subcommittee's request and recommendation, Dr. Rockenbach agreed to work with the Education work group to identify and coordinate instructional components, and supplemental materials and resources in the compendium with the most appropriate instructional methodology according to subject matter, student maturity and proficiency, and grade level. The work group reviewed the outline and segment #1 of the educational DVD and expressed concern regarding generalizations, the message, and the need for clarification and alignment with the revised Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies. The subcommittee recommended to the Education work group that it would be prudent to engage a panel of classroom teachers and other educators to vet the supplemental instructional materials for compatibility, age appropriateness, SOL alignment, consistency with the Commission's goals, and ease of use by teachers before the Commission's release of the compendium, and that the work group recommend that the Commission preview the DVD before its release with the Commission's imprimatur. The subcommittee noted that the compendium must also accommodate the diversity in Virginia classrooms and colleges across the Commonwealth, comply with state and federal laws ensuring a free and appropriate public education for all school age students, (i.e. ESL, disabled students), and available to homeschooled and private school students. It was agreed that peer review and the investment of educators in the latter process would greatly increase the likelihood of the compendium's acceptance by local school divisions and its actual use by teachers in classroom instruction.

### **Grant Opportunities**

Ms. Betsy Barton, history specialist representing the Department of Education, briefed the subcommittee and the work group regarding agencies such as the Department of Historic Resources, in partnership with Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership, which have received grant funding in anticipation of the sesquicentennial. She also shared that the Virginia Department of Education Office of Educational Technology has applied for grant funding from the MacArthur Foundation to leverage GPS-enable mobile devices, digitized primary source materials, and social media tools to promote a deep and shared understanding of the Civil War. The project will allow battlefield visitors to use a variety of digital tools and media to access, contribute to, and distribute historical narratives around the Civil War, including exploring how platforms that combine social networking with geographic and presence technologies (e.g. Google Earth, Socialight) can enable learners to access and share text, images, audio, and video artifacts. The Department is working with the National Park Service to track GPS waypoints and trails across Virginia, highlighting key actions in Civil War battles and primary and secondary source materials. The Department's project also includes collaboration with Virginia Tech, the University of Richmond's History Engine, the Library of Congress American Memory Project, and the University of Virginia American Civil War Collections for the development of certain other exciting and innovative facets of the project. Notification of the grant award is expected in the spring/summer of 2009. The Subcommittee and the Work Group expressed keen interest in the projects of the Department of Historic Resources and the Department of Education and in the possibility of their inclusion in the compendium when complete information concerning them becomes available.

### **Compendium**

In view of the presentations and its deliberations, the subcommittee renewed the discussion regarding types of information that should be made available to classroom teachers and approved teacher education programs via the compendium that is being developed and recommended to the Commission to enable it to meet its education goals. Senator Mamie Locke, Subcommittee Chairwoman, assigned certain of the subcommittee members, with the assistance of Dr. Rockenbach, to work with Brenda Edwards, staff contact for the subcommittee and the Education work group, in developing the compendium, pending the Education work group's adoption of the subcommittee's recommendations.

### **Education Work Group Meeting**

The Education Work Group meeting was convened by the chairman, Delegate Algie T. Howell, who expressed appreciation to Virginia State University President Eddie Moore for the school's hospitality in hosting the Commission's work group. After preliminary remarks, he opened the floor for nominations for vice chairman of the Education Work Group. Absent nominations, Delegate Albert C. Eisenberg volunteered to serve as vice chairman.

### **Fight for Freedom Civil War Weekend Tour**

Mr. Asa Gordon, Secretary General of the Sons and Daughters of United States Colored Troops, and Mr. Michael Hemphill, representing Civil War Journey, addressed the work group regarding the "Fight for Freedom" Civil War Weekend Tour co-sponsored by their respective groups. The Fight for Freedom Civil War Weekend Tour will explore the political, social, and battlefield experiences of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War from Fort Monroe to the fall of Richmond. The story of civilian Africans Americans will also be told and landmarks and battlefields significant to their struggle and liberation will be visited. The tour will also include reenactments lectures, and book signings. An effort to obtain in-service credit for teachers who attend the tour is being sought. Mr. Gordon requested the work group's assistance in selecting teachers to participate in the tour, and the Commission's support of the tour.

### **Signature Conferences**

Ms. Danielle Watkins, Commission Development Officer, briefed the work group concerning the signature conferences and other initiatives of the Civil War Commission. She provided information regarding the first conference which will be held at the University of Richmond in April 2009. She encouraged members to attend the conference and to share this information with their respective constituents. She also commented on other signature conferences that have been planned and other commemorative events for the sesquicentennial which begin officially with a joint program between the Commonwealth and West Virginia in 2009.

### **Report of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee**

Senator Mamie E. Locke, Chairwoman of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee, briefed the work group regarding the subcommittee's deliberations and recommendations. She reported that (i) Dr. Rockenbach provided a primer on the instructional methodologies for teaching American Civil War history, (ii) the subcommittee addressed the issues before it somberly and deliberately, with each member contributing their particular expertise to the matters before the subcommittee, (iii) the subcommittee reviewed the outline and segment #1 of the narrative for the educational DVD, (iv) the contents of the compendium were discussed and a group was named to work with Brenda Edwards, and (v) the difficult issues that may be generated for classroom teachers when presenting the American Civil War were acknowledged and discussed. She reported that the subcommittee agreed that each of the instructional methodologies for teaching American Civil War history could be used at appropriate times during classroom instruction and with different age groups, depending on student maturity and proficiency in the subject matter, and that the subcommittee expressed concerns regarding certain of the content of segment #1 and whether it was consistent with the revised Standards of Learning for History and Social Studies. The subcommittee recommended that (i) the members assigned to work with Ms. Edwards in developing the compendium be approved; (ii) the compendium cite which instructional methodology would be more appropriate to help students understand different aspects of American Civil War history at various grade levels; (iii) the Education work group seek access to the full script for the educational DVD to ensure alignment with the Standards of Learning and seek clarification of certain of the content of segment #1; (iv) due to time constraints, the Education work group proceed with identifying and developing the other supplemental educational materials that will compose the compendium until more specific and concrete information regarding the DVD has been obtained; (v) the Commission preview the DVD before its release with the Commission's imprimatur; and (vi) a panel of classroom teachers and other educators be impaneled to vet the compendium's other supplemental educational materials for compatibility, age appropriateness, SOL alignment, consistency with the Commission's goals, and ease of use by teachers before the Commission's release of and imprimatur on the compendium. It was emphasized that peer review and the investment of educators in this process would greatly increase the likelihood of the compendium's acceptance by local school divisions and its actual use by teachers in classroom instruction.

### **Law School Symposia**

Ms. Brenda Edwards, staff contact for the Education Work Group, presented the preliminary plans for the law school symposia, and reviewed with the members the status of the remaining programs and activities on the work plan. She noted that the Commission has directed the work group to plan and organize two programs relating to legal issues associated with the American Civil War. The first program, "*Virginia v. West Virginia*," will be presented in 2011 at a law school or courtroom in Virginia. The state of West Virginia, formerly a part of the Commonwealth of Virginia, was formed during the Civil War in 1861, in opposition to the passage of the Ordinance of Secession by the Virginia General Assembly. Many questions concerning the constitutionality of the formation of the state and, therefore, the legality of its statehood have been raised. This half-day program will examine the constitutional issues related to and the legality of West Virginia's statehood through a moot court proceeding. In the genre of domestic relations cases, the moot court proceedings will be designed to examine the historical and legal records from a fresh perspective by addressing the pertinent constitutional issues in the context of the sociopolitical realities of that era, the legitimacy—legal and moral—for the severance of the western portion of Virginia, the relevancy of the decision to contemporary concerns, and how the provocations generated by the formation of West Virginia relate to the current relationship between Virginia and West Virginia. The moot court proceeding will not be a reenactment of the Supreme Court decision. To accomplish the program, the legal and judicial communities of Virginia and West Virginia, the Virginia Supreme Court, and law schools in Virginia and West Virginia will be invited to participate in the program.

The second program, offered in the spring of 2013, the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, will be a symposium that examines the historical, political, social, and legal context of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, the import of these Amendments on the rule of law, and their legacy in modern times. The Amendments, often referred to as the Civil War or Reconstruction Amendments, were birthed during unusual times in the life of the nation. The Amendments abolished slavery, conveyed the right of citizenship to persons born in America and equal protection under the law, and prohibited discrimination against the right to vote on the basis on race or previous condition of servitude. The half-day symposium will gather a panel of notable legal scholars, historians, educators, and other experts to explore, analyze, and discuss the historical, cultural, social, and political setting of the genesis of the Amendments, the effect of the Amendments on the rule of law and public policy, the relevancy of the Amendments to the quality of life for Virginians and the nation today, whether each Amendment has effectively achieved its purpose, and the necessity for the Amendments in the future. An institution of higher education in Virginia will be invited to host this symposium, which will be open to the public.

### **Education Work Group Actions**

Chairman Howell requested that members respond to staff regarding the decision matrix listing the remaining items on the work plan by October 23, 2008. The Education work group unanimously adopted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee and directed Ms. Edwards to continue to develop the compendium as prescribed, implement the plans for the law school symposia and the remaining programs and activities on the work plan, and report the status of the compendium and plans to the work group for its consideration and action at the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

Meetings of the Education Work Group have been suspended for the remainder of the year; however, staff work will continue.

### **Chairman:**

The Hon. Algie T. Howell, Jr.

### **For information, contact:**

Brenda H. Edwards, DLS Staff, Work Group #3 (Education)