

VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION 2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Background

The General Assembly created the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission in 2006 for the purpose of preparing for and commemorating the sesquicentennial of Virginia's participation in the American Civil War. The Commission is charged with:

- Planning commemorative programs and activities that are designed to involve all citizens and result in a positive legacy and long-term public benefit;
- Encouraging civic, historical, educational, economic, and other organizations throughout Virginia to organize and participate in activities to expand the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the American Civil War; and
- Providing technical assistance to localities and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War.

At least 20 other states have joined Virginia in establishing sesquicentennial planning commissions. Staff continues to participate in quarterly conference calls with designees in other states to share information and seek ways to work collaboratively. In addition, staff periodically briefs members of the Virginia congressional delegation on the Commission's efforts, and works closely with the National Park Service to plan events marking major anniversary dates. The Commission was represented at a number of Civil War roundtable meetings in 2009, the Civil War Trails annual meeting, and the Virginia One Tourism Conference. In addition, regional informational meetings were held during the summer in Blacksburg, Lexington, Charlottesville, Richmond, Norfolk, Halifax, Fairfax, and Spotsylvania.

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was established in 2007 to raise private funds in support of the sesquicentennial commemoration. The Foundation's Board of Trustees is comprised of: William J. Howell (*Chair*), Charles J. Colgan (*Vice Chair*), Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr., J. Alfred Broaddus, J. Stewart Bryan, III, Albert C. Eisenberg, Dr. Irvin E. Hess, Algie T. Howell, Jr., Eddie N. Moore, Jr., and Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.

Development efforts continued to be successful in 2009, despite the economic recession. Chiefly, the Commission was awarded a \$950,000 Chairman's Special Award grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of the museum exhibition and *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile*. In addition, support for commemorative programming was also generously

contributed by Altria, Wal-Mart, Roller-Bottimore Foundation, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, and members of the *Civil War 150 Council*.

The Sesquicentennial Begins

Many historians see 2009 as the beginning of the sesquicentennial commemoration, as it marks the 150th anniversary of John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry. Virginia led the kickoff of the sesquicentennial with high-caliber programs that demonstrated a strong focus on education and set the tone for the commemoration nationwide. The Commission:

- Sponsored the first major sesquicentennial program in the nation, *America on the Eve of the Civil War*. The first of an annual Signature Conference series, the program was chaired by Dr. Edward L. Ayers, President of the University of Richmond, and was widely hailed as setting the standard for all sesquicentennial programs to follow.
- Worked in conjunction with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, "kicking off" the sesquicentennial commemoration in summer 2009.
- Distributed over 2,000 DVDs free of charge to each public elementary, middle and high school in Virginia. *Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance* was created as a resource for teachers by Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., Distinguished Alumni Professor of History at Virginia Tech.

Projects in Development

As a cost-savings measure, the full Commission held only one meeting in 2009. However, the Executive Committee met throughout the year, with ongoing staff efforts and informal working groups moving project development forward on schedule.

I. Signature Conference Series

2009 Signature Conference: "*America on the Eve of the Civil War*" - Dr. Edward L. Ayers, Conference Chair (University of Richmond, April 29, 2009)

Featuring unscripted, open dialogue among leading historians about the United States in 1859, this program was approached as an experiment in public history that sets a tone of inclusion and innovation in the country's conversations about the Civil War. Conducted in an interactive format like today's television news shows, historians discussed events of 1859 and their effect, limiting themselves only to what would have been known at that time. Each session was moderated by Dr. Ayers and featured noted historians:

"Taking Stock of the Nation in 1859"

Panelists: Christy Coleman, Gary Gallagher, Walter Johnson, Joan Waugh

"The Future of Virginia and the South"

Panelists: Charles Dew, Robert Kenzer, Gregg Kimball, Lauranett Lee

"Making Sense of John Brown's Raid"

Panelists: David Blight, David Reynolds, Manisha Sinha, Clarence Walker

"Predictions for the Election of 1860"

Panelists: Jean Baker, Daniel Crofts, Nelson Lankford, Elizabeth Varon

The program had a broad reach. In addition to those who attended the program - 2,000 people from 26 different states - more than 500 people from three different countries, including troops stationed in Iraq, viewed the webcast the day of conference. There were well over 22,000 hits on the Commission's website the day of the conference alone, with viewings of the archived video footage beginning 10 minutes after being posted. A two-volume DVD set of the program is available through the Commission's website, and the conference proceedings will be published by UVA Press in 2010.

2010 Signature Conference: "Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History and Memory" - Dr. James O. Horton, Conference Chair (Norfolk State University, September 24, 2010)

Following the very successful first Signature Conference, planning began in earnest for the second program, which focuses on slavery and the Civil War. Dr. James O. Horton, Benjamin Banneker Professor Emeritus of American Studies and History at George Washington University, was selected as conference chair, and Norfolk State University agreed to serve as host. Planning remains underway, with invited participants to date including:

Ira Berlin (University of Maryland)

David Blight (Yale University)

Spencer Crew (George Mason University)

Jean Fagan Yellin (Pace University)

Bruce Levine (University of Illinois)

James McPherson (Princeton University)

Edna Medford (Howard University)

Cassandra Newby-Alexander (Norfolk State University)

Dwight Pitcaithley (Chief Historian Emeritus, National Park Service)

Staff is also working with the chairmen and host institutions to plan future conferences in this innovative series, a tentative schedule for which is below:

2011: *American Military Strategy and the Civil War*

Conference Chair: Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.

Location: Virginia Tech

Date: May 21, 2011

2012: *Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War*

Conference Chair: Lt. Gen. John W. Knapp

Location: Virginia Military Institute
Date: March 22, 2012

2013: *The Home Front in the Civil War*
Conference Co-Chairs: Dr. Scott R. Nelson and Dr. Carol Sheriff
Location: College of William and Mary
Date: TBD

2014: *Civil War in a Global Context*
Conference Chair: Dr. Peter N. Stearns
Location: George Mason University
Date: TBD

2015: *Memory of the Civil War*
Conference Chair: Dr. Gary W. Gallagher
Location: University of Virginia
Date: TBD

II. Sesquicentennial DVD for Schools: *"Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance"*

Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., Alumni Distinguished Professor in History at Virginia Tech worked with Blue Ridge Public Television to create a film for schools, *"Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance."* In November, the two-DVD set was provided free of charge to every public elementary, middle, and high school in the Commonwealth, as well as to each public library system and every local sesquicentennial committee. Hundreds of copies have subsequently sold through the Commission's website.

The film features high-definition footage and commentary from dozens of noted historians. Designed to be used by teachers in the classroom, the DVD is divided into nine 20-minute modules that focus on the background of the war, military campaigns, the African-American experience, leading Virginia personalities, the common soldier, home front activities, and legacies of the war for all Americans. The program has received high praise from teachers and general audiences alike.

III. Museum Exhibition: *"An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia"*

An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia, one of the Commission's Signature Projects, received the National Endowment for the Humanities' Chairman's Special Award in the amount of \$950,000, the highest level grant bestowed. The exhibition was distinguished for its unique ability to bring multiple perspectives of the Civil War to multiple audiences in multiple formats, its nationwide reach, and its ability to serve as a model to other states.

An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia has four components: (i) a 3,000-square-foot gallery exhibition to be shown at the Virginia Historical Society in 2011, then at seven regional museum in Virginia from 2012 to 2015; (ii) an interactive mobile exhibition in a 53-foot expandable tractor-trailer, which will travel throughout the U.S. from 2011 to 2015, bringing Civil War history to the people; (iii) a small, short-term, mobile panel exhibition designed for

schools, libraries, and non-traditional venues; and (iv) an online resource that combines aspects of the gallery exhibition with public programming opportunities and activities for the general public.

The exhibition explores personal experiences and poses questions to visitors that challenge conventional wisdom. It seeks to portray a balanced story of Virginia's participation in the Civil War that invites discovery and includes multiple perspectives: Union, Confederate and African-American; battlefield and home front; and causes and legacies of the war. As with all of the Commission's programs, the educational resource will have elements that are meaningful to all Virginians, including diverse racial and ethnic groups, young people, and those who do not have a hereditary link to the American Civil War.

A Project Review Team comprised of staff of the Virginia Historical Society, the United States Army Center of Military History, and other historians, is refining recommendations for the *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile* mobile exhibition. Recommendations will be presented to the Commission in Spring 2010.

IV. Civil War 150 Legacy Project: Document Digitization and Access

The Library of Virginia, working in conjunction with Commission staff and local sesquicentennial committees, conducted two pilot tests of the document digitization project in Danville and Winchester. Staff also created workflow plans, procedure, metadata requirements, equipment needs, permission forms, and a rough timeline for the accomplishment of the project. All of the hardware and infrastructure for the project was purchased with funding provided by a grant from the Roller-Bottimore Foundation. Library of Virginia staff were also involved in two in-house scanning projects of collections of private individuals. The work on the scanned images obtained from the two test sites and two private individuals has been completed, and all of the images to be used (744) are described and mounted on the Library of Virginia's website (http://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/collections_a_to_z, under "Civil War Legacy Project").

Due to the success of the pilot project, the Commission funded the project for the next two years. The Library of Virginia will hire two staff people dedicated to the project and work with the local committee system, traveling throughout the Commonwealth collecting images.

V. Sesquicentennial Marketing Program Grants

In April 2008, the Commission authorized a micro-grant program for local sesquicentennial committees through the Virginia Tourism Corporation. Each grant requires a minimum of three partners and a 1:1 match. The maximum award amount in the first round of grants (January - March 2009) was \$2,500. The maximum award amount in the second round of grants (September - November 2009) was increased to \$5,000.

2009 grant recipients are:

April 2009

Shenandoah County Sesquicentennial Committee

"Caring for the Wounded: Shenandoah County's Civil War Story"

- Amount of award: \$1,300; Amount of match from recipient: \$1,300
- Project will enable visitors to learn more about the history of the Mt. Jackson hospital facility that was able to house and care for 1,500 wounded soldiers at a time.

Washington County Sesquicentennial Committee

"Washington County Sesquicentennial Tourism Marketing Program"

- Amount of award: \$2,500; Amount of match from recipient: \$4,160
- Install Civil War Trail interpretive markers: one at the approximate location of the home of Landon Boyd, a local prominent African-American citizen during the American Civil War era and another at the Washington County Courthouse detailing the effects of Union Major General George Stoneman's Raid.

Fredericksburg/Stafford Joint Sesquicentennial Committee

"The Crossing"

- Amount of award: \$2,500; Amount of match from recipient: \$3,000
- Project will commemorate and interpret the 10,000 slaves who crossed the Rappahannock to freedom during the spring and summer of 1862.

Richmond Metropolitan Sesquicentennial Committee

"Richmond-Petersburg Civil War Sesquicentennial Website"

- Amount of award: \$2,500; Amount of match from recipient: \$25,000
- Development of a website (www.OnToRichmond.com) that will be the primary destination for information and resources about visiting the Richmond/Petersburg Region throughout the Sesquicentennial period.

December 2009

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Local Sesquicentennial Committee

"Expansion of Civil War Trails Interpretive Signage in Downtown Harrisonburg"

- Amount of award: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient: \$5,700
- Construction of three new Civil War Trails Markers highlighting the history of the Confederate General Hospital, Woodbine Cemetery and the site of Hill's Hotel.

Page County Sesquicentennial Committee

"Discover Page County's Unknown Stories . . . the American Civil War - A Historical Driving Tour Brochure and Map"

- Amount of award: \$1,924.50; Amount of match from recipient: \$1,924.50
- Production and printing of driving brochure that highlights historical sites throughout Page County

Gloucester County Sesquicentennial Committee

"Gloucester County Civil War History Initiative"

- Amount of award: \$3,425.00; Amount of match from recipient: \$3,425.00
- Marketing for the new Civil War Trails site in Court Circle, which holds monuments of Confederate soldiers and African-American Union soldiers.

Norfolk Sesquicentennial Committee/Virginia Arts Festival

"Rappahannock County"

- Amount of award: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient: \$30,865.00
- Marketing to support Norfolk premiere of a concert opera, *Rappahannock County*, that uses lyrics, music and projected visuals to explore the sociological and psychological impact of the Civil War on a community in Northern Virginia.

Richmond, Fredericksburg and Shenandoah Sesquicentennial Committees (Regional collaboration)

"American Civil War Tour in Virginia: International Pow Wow"

- Amount of award: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient: \$5,000
- Promotion of a regional Virginia Civil War travel itinerary to international travelers during the U.S. Travel's International Pow Wow, a three-day gathering of travel buyers from more than 70 countries.

VI. Internet Battlefield Tours (Vodcast series) and Informational Kiosks

The Commission is using technology to engage new audiences through vodcasts, interactive maps, kiosks, and more. A vodcast written by John Hennessy, Chief Historian of the Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania National Military Park, which portrays the pivotal role of Virginia in the Civil War, was premiered at the Harpers Ferry kickoff event in June. The vodcast series, which is available on the Commission's website, will highlight pivotal Civil War events throughout Virginia.

Virginia State Parks has developed and installed over 30 touch-screen kiosks throughout the state park system for visitor use. Joe Elton, State Parks Director, generously offered to allow the Commission to add Civil War-related information to the existing kiosk system. Partnering with the state parks and using existing infrastructure, rather than developing new kiosks, will save approximately \$600,000.

The Commission will work collaboratively with the state parks and Imperial Multimedia to incorporate its web-based resources on the existing kiosks in the state park system, the Capitol Trail and on www.virginiaoutdoors.net. The Virginia Tourism Corporation will collaborate with this partnership by sharing hotel, restaurant, lodging, and reservation data.