

Va. Will Mark Civil War Anniversary

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[Hank Silverberg](#), WTOP Radio

WASHINGTON-- In some parts of Virginia, echoes of the Civil War still sound strong. In other parts, there's barely a reminder of America's 19th century bloodbath.

But over the next couple of years Virginians will hear plenty about the 123 battles fought in the Old Dominion.

April 12, 2011 will mark the sesquicentennial of the Civil War which started at Fort Sumter, South Carolina on April 12, 1861 and ended, four years later on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox.

Some of the biggest battles were fought in Virginia--some of the bloodiest within a few miles of each other near Cold Harbor, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Courthouse. Between 2011 and 2015 there will be numerous commemorations.

The Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission is trying to secure more state funding to help preserve the battlefields. About 30 acres of hallowed ground from more than 6,000 Civil War skirmishes and battles are destroyed across the country every day. The commission would like to preserve at least 50,000 acres before the start of events.

Jim Campi, of the Civil War Preservation Trust, said the war still resonates with people.

"One out of three Americans has an ancestor who served in the Civil War," he said. "So there is an incredible connection that goes back 150 years to this titanic struggle," he said.

The stories of the Civil War are an important part of the state's history and the Sesquicentennial will provide a context for events.

"The focus will wind up being about education to increase public interest in the various stories of the Civil War," Campi said.

Sesquicentennial across the country will start before 2011. There are already plans to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Abolitionist John Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry in 2009. The attack was on October 16th , 1859

The Civil War Preservation Trust has saved 12, 000 acres at 40 battlefield sites in Virginia.

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