

	<p>VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION</p> <p>910 Capitol Street, General Assembly Building, 2nd floor Richmond, Virginia 23219</p> <p>www.VirginiaCivilWar.org</p>
---	--

About the Commission

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission, the first of its kind in the nation, was created in 2006 (HB 1440, Acts c. 465). A legislative commission led by Speaker of the House of Delegates William J. Howell and Senate President pro tempore Charles J. Colgan, Sr., the Commission is charged with planning for and commemorating the 150th anniversary of Virginia's participation in the American Civil War. The commemoration began in 2009 with the anniversary of John Brown's Raid and runs through 2015.

In the absence of a federal sesquicentennial commission, Virginia is recognized as the national leader of the sesquicentennial by virtue of its strong state support, comprehensive initiatives, and inclusive approach. The Commission works with other states' planning efforts to offer assistance and seek ways in which to work collaboratively.

Commission Members

Speaker William J. Howell, *Chair*
Del. T. Scott Garrett
Del. Algie T. Howell, Jr.
Del. Johnny S. Joannou
Del. Mark L. Keam
Del. L. Scott Lingamfelter
Del. Thomas C. Wright, Jr.

Sen. Charles J. Colgan, Sr. *Vice Chair*
Sen. R. Creigh Deeds
Sen. John S. Edwards
Sen. Janet D. Howell
Sen. Mamie E. Locke
John P. Ackerly, III
Dr. Paul A. Levensgood
Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.

The Commission is particularly proud to work in close partnership with the Virginia Historical Society, and with Dr. James I. "Bud" Robertson, Jr., the nationally acclaimed Civil War historian who heads the Center for Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech. By way of background, Dr. Robertson was appointed by President Kennedy to take over as the Executive Director of the federal Centennial Commission in December 1961, bringing positive change to a commemoration that began poorly. Among the chief lessons learned from the shortfalls of centennial is to focus on education and create a wide variety of balanced programs.

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was created to oversee fundraising initiatives, and the Commission works with a distinguished Advisory Council that has been instrumental in developing parameters to guide the commemoration. The Foundation Board of Trustees and members of the Advisory Council are drawn from the state's leading education, historic and tourism institutions including: historians; representatives

from museums, battlefields, and the National Park Service; leaders in state and local government; and education experts.

The following goals guide Virginia's sesquicentennial commemoration:

Diversity: The commemoration will be inclusive of, and meaningful to, all Virginians, particularly:

- Diverse racial and ethnic groups
- New citizens and those who do not have a hereditary link to the American Civil War
- Young people and those who do not understand the relevance of the American Civil War to today's population

Inclusiveness: The commemoration will seek to portray a balanced story of Virginia's participation in the American Civil War that includes stories from African-American, Union and Confederate perspectives; battlefield as well as home front; slavery and freedom; and the causes of the war and its enduring legacies.

Statewide Accessibility: The commemoration will be statewide, involving all localities and encompassing all Civil War-related institutions, museums, battlefields, parks and facilities.

Education: The commemoration period will have a strong education component, intended to ignite a renewed interest in Virginia's historical heritage. Opportunities will be captured to re-examine the lessons of the past and the legacies of the Civil War in an effort to understand how they have defined the present and continue to shape our future.

Permanence: The Commission intends the commemoration to have a long-lasting effect and legacy, continuing well past 2015.

Commemoration, not celebration

It is important to realize that this is a *commemoration*, not a *celebration*. There is no joy to be found in a war that caused the deaths of over 620,000 Americans, divided families, tore apart a nation, and left cities in ruin. Rather, it is a chance to examine the time, the people, the causes and the legacies of the Civil War. The 150th anniversary of the Civil War provides an opportunity to discuss all aspects of the story: Union, Confederate and African-American; battlefield and home front; and stories of slavery and freedom. There is much that we can learn from an honest and comprehensive examination of the Civil War, a conflict that defined the nation.

Civil War Sesquicentennial in Programs: Virginia Leading the Way

Virginia is recognized as the national leader of the sesquicentennial by virtue of its strong state support, well-developed initiatives, and comprehensive approach. The Commission is leading a statewide coordination effort and planning a number of major programs and annual events that includes:

Statewide Coordination: The Commission coordinates, unifies, and supports the rich network of existing museums and Civil War sites in the Commonwealth. Working with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Commission promotes Civil War museums and historic sites with a view to making it easy for visitors and citizens to plan visits to Civil War-related sites throughout the Commonwealth. As

part of this coordination effort, each locality was asked to form a sesquicentennial committee to work with the Commission and to coordinate planning at the local level. Nearly all of the localities in Virginia have created such committees.

The multi-faceted coordination effort includes:

- A partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to develop and place touch-screen kiosks with sesquicentennial and tourism information at Welcome Centers and other key locations throughout the state.
- A grant program that provides funding to localities for marketing of sesquicentennial-related events.
- A dynamic and information-rich website that includes an interactive "Then and Now" map, podcasts, webcast videos, encyclopedic information, "Ask an Expert" feature, and a Statewide Calendar of Events. For more information, see: www.VirginiaCivilWar.org.

Traveling Exhibition: *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia*: The Commission is working with the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) in the production of a three-part major exhibition, *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia*, which will depict life both on the battlefield as well as the home front, and will be rich in artifacts, documents, and high-tech components. The gallery exhibition opens at the VHS in Richmond on February 4, 2011, and then will travel over the next three years to Roanoke, Abingdon, Lynchburg, Winchester, Quantico, Hampton and Appomattox. A complementary panel exhibit will also be developed for travel within and outside of the Commonwealth. More information is available at: <http://www.vahistorical.org/civilwar/main.htm>

Civil War 150 HistoryMobile (tractor trailer) Exhibition: The Commission is also developing a *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile* that will be derived from *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia*. The *HistoryMobile* will be housed in a 53' single-expandable tractor trailer and contain high-tech interactive displays to present both battlefield and home front stories, as well as local history and tourism information. The *HistoryMobile* will travel throughout Virginia and beyond, drawing audiences to events and activities in the Commonwealth.

The Commission received a *We the People* grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in the amount of \$950,000 in support of the *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile* and the VHS-led gallery exhibition in 2009. The Commission is only the third recipient of this prestigious Chairman's Special Award grant.

Civil War 150 Legacy Project: Document Digitization and Access: The Commission and the Library of Virginia are partnering to identify and locate original manuscript material concerning the Civil War. These materials may include letters, photographs, diaries, maps, and other Civil War-era materials.

The Library of Virginia is sending teams of archivists to scan privately-held manuscript material for inclusion on both the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission websites. The teams are coordinating visits with local sesquicentennial committees to ensure coverage of the entire state. For more, see: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/legacy/>

Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance - DVD Educational Resource:

Working with James I. Robertson, Jr., Distinguished Alumni Professor of History at Virginia Tech and Executive Director of the Center for Civil War Studies, the Commission developed a DVD to serve as an educational resource throughout the commemoration, *Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance*. In November 2009, over 2,000 DVD sets were distributed to each public elementary, middle and high school in Virginia to be used as a supplemental teaching resource. In addition, each public library system and every local sesquicentennial committee in the state received the DVD set.

Divided into nine 20-minute segments to facilitate ease of teacher use in the classroom, segments 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. In 2010, this program was nominated for an Emmy award and won two bronze Telly Awards in the categories of education / academic use and history/biography. See: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/education.php>

Walk In Their Footsteps database: The Commission is developing a research portal and database that provides regimental history information for Civil War battles fought in Virginia. This comprehensive database will offer a launching point for people across the nation to map out and visit the actual sites where their ancestors may have marched and fought while serving during the Civil War.

The Commission is also partnering with the National Park Service and state battlefield sites throughout Virginia to develop interactive ‘vodcast’ battlefield tours enabling widespread access via the Internet.

Signature Conference Series: The Commission is sponsoring an annual conference series featuring the nation’s finest historians that focuses on fostering broad public understanding of the history of the Civil War. While each conference stands on its own, taken as a whole the series will address the full spectrum of Civil War history.

The first Signature Conference was the first major sesquicentennial program in the nation and was widely hailed as setting the standard for the sesquicentennial commemoration nationwide. The second conference drew similar widespread praise, and both programs brought several thousand attendees from across the country and internationally.

The complete Signature Conference series is below:

2009: *America on the Eve of the Civil War*

Conference Chair: Dr. Edward L. Ayers

Location: University of Richmond

Date: April 29, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2009conference.php>

2010: *Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History*

Conference Chair: Dr. James O. Horton

Location: Norfolk State University

Date: September 24, 2010

Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2010conference.php>

2011: *Military Strategy in the American Civil War*

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

Location: Virginia Tech

Date: May 21, 2011

Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2011conference.php>

2012: *Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War*

Conference Chair: Lt. Gen. John 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 Gallagher

Location: University of Virginia

Date: TBD

Anniversary Events: The Commission worked in partnership with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and the West Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission to "kick off" the sesquicentennial commemoration nationwide at Harpers Ferry in summer 2009, in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of John Brown's Raid.

Other major anniversary events are:

2011: First Battle of Manassas (150th Anniversary Event: July 21, 2011 - Manassas National Battlefield Park)

2012: Battle of the Ironclads; Peninsula Campaign (Hampton Roads; peninsula area)
Seven Days Battles (Richmond)
Jackson's Valley Campaign (Shenandoah Valley)

2013: Emancipation Proclamation
Chancellorsville (Fredericksburg/Stafford)

2014: Overland Campaign (Spotsylvania)
Siege of Petersburg

2015: Appomattox Courthouse

For more information, contact:

Cheryl Jackson, Executive Director

Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

Division of Legislative Services

910 Capitol Street, GAB 2nd floor

Richmond, Virginia 23219

Office: (804) 786-3591

Fax: (804) 692-0625

cjackson@dls.virginia.gov

www.VirginiaCivilWar.org