

VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION
Report of the Commission

Speaker of the House William J. Howell, Chairman

June 10, 2008

Opening Remarks-Speaker Howell

Commission members present: Speaker William J. Howell, Delegate Algie T. Howell, Jr., Delegate Steven Landes, Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter, Senator Mamie Locke, John P. Ackerly III, and Dr. Charles Bryan, Jr.

Speaker Howell welcomed everyone in attendance at the meeting and had the Commission members and staff introduce themselves; he also recognized the four local committee chairs that were present. He thanked everyone at Fort Monroe for welcoming the Commission and also thanked John Quarstein, who would lead the group on a tour after lunch.

Fort Monroe: Past, Present, and Future- Conover Hunt and John Quarstein

Conover Hunt, Deputy Director of the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority (FMFADA), gave an update on the current situation and future of Fort Monroe when the base closes in 2011. The development plans include protecting the historic assets while providing public access to the land and beaches, seeking economic sustainability, and allowing new development within strict limits that will not compromise Fort Monroe's National Historic Landmark designation. This is a long-term development plan that may take 20-30 years to fully implement.

John Quarstein, Historian from the City of Hampton, gave a brief history of Fort Monroe and its significance during the Civil War. It was at Fort Monroe, that General Benjamin Butler declared that slaves were "contraband of war," making the fort a place of refuge for enslaved persons and referred to as "Freedom's Fortress."

Civil War Trails Program: Sesquicentennial Coordination Partner- Mitch Bowman

Mitch Bowman, Executive Director of the Civil War Trails Program, presented to the Commission an overview of the program and the partnership formed between the two entities. The Civil War Trails Program has installed over 800 interpretive markers at Civil War sites in Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, West Virginia and Tennessee. The program has gained popularity throughout the country with 3,000 map guides downloaded per week from its website and in the first half of 2008, the Virginia Tourism Corporation has mailed out over 50,000 Civil War Trails Program packets. The Civil War Trails Program provides a seamless travel system across state lines, a tourism structure for communities and states, and opportunities for preservation, interpretation, and education.

Dr. Bryan inquired about the possibility of using a radio station for travelers to tune into while driving throughout the state that would give area-specific information about nearby Civil War

sites. Mr. Bowman explained that the program has looked into similar options and found that the cost is very high. He noted that the program's website does have podcasts and his staff continues to explore other technological advances. Mr. Bowman stated that an important part of the program and the secret to preservation is getting the traveler out of the vehicle.

Staff Report- Cheryl Jackson

Ms. Jackson commended the Commission after reading an article published by the American Association of State and Local History for being on the right track with its sesquicentennial recommendations.

Dr. Robertson sent a message to Ms. Jackson to share with the Commission about the progress of the Virginia Tech/Blue Ridge DVD project. Over two dozen scenes have been filmed already and while the scripts are not finalized yet, Dr. Robertson hopes to be able to provide the Commission with some short clips during the fall meeting.

Dr. Bryan updated the Commission on the status of the museum exhibition. The exhibition will be in two parts, "The Battle Front" and "The Home Front." It will be open in February 2011 at the Virginia Historical Society. From 2012 to 2015, the exhibition will be divided into two components and travel to various museums throughout the Commonwealth. "The Battle Front" will interpret the major military actions in a chronological narrative. "The Home Front" will give visitors an understanding of life behind and between battle lines.

At the last meeting, the Commission allocated \$750,000 to the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) to pay for the museum exhibit. The Commission members were informed that due to their current budget situation, they could allocate more funds to the VHS this year if they desired. The Commission decided, by acclamation, to allocate an additional \$250,000 to VHS. The total amount to be paid to VHS is \$1,000,000.

Ms. Jackson also discussed the progress of the HistoryMobile. Delegate Lingamfelter has been working on finding a trailer that would be donated to the Commission and there has been an offer of an in-kind donation of a tractor. For the HistoryMobile, the Commission allocated \$5,000 to hire a consultant who will determine which pieces of the museum exhibition would be appropriate in the HistoryMobile and develop a budget for the project, so the Commission will know what the HistoryMobile will look like and cost. The consultant will work with the Commission staff and will make a report in September. Dr. Bryan mentioned the rising fuel prices may affect the HistoryMobile and that the Commission will need to think of that when budgeting for this project.

Ms. Jackson informed the Commission that currently 44 local committees have been formed. Speaker Howell will also be sending follow-up letters this week to those localities that have not formed committees to date.

A Memorandum of Understanding has also been drafted for local committees who seek use of the Commission's logo in furtherance of the Commission's goals. Any group that wants to use

the logo must apply through their local committee and the local committee would have the first right of refusal.

Ms. Jackson demonstrated the newly launched interactive map and the "Ask an Expert" on the Commission's website. She encouraged members to work with local committees to fill in the narrative portion for each locality. Dr. Bryan emphasized the importance of the website being accurate in all accounts of the Civil War. Delegate Lingamfelter suggested researching which regiments were at each battle and place the information on the website for those travelers that are interested in or have historic ties to a particular regiment.

Ms. Jackson introduced Sandy Treadway, Chair of the Advisory Council, to the Commission members. The Advisory Council will have its second meeting on June 24 and report to the Commission in the fall. The proposed agenda includes a review of the plans to date, additional suggestions of plans and events, and the development of new ways to reach out to localities and market the Sesquicentennial.

Delegate Landes asked that the Advisory Council develop ways to encourage localities to form local committees and begin planning for the Sesquicentennial.

Commission staff will be traveling to Harper's Ferry next week to meet with representatives from the West Virginia legislature, Civil War Preservation Trust, and Harper's Ferry National Historic Park to plan the national kickoff event June 25-26, 2009. The proposed two-day event includes panel discussions on the first day and tours of Harper's Ferry on the second day.

The Commission members reviewed the proposals for the Signatures Conferences/Meeting Tours and will make a final decision at a later meeting.