

Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission  
November 28, 2007

A meeting of the full Commission was held in Richmond at the Virginia Historical Society. Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr., welcomed members and provided a brief history of the museum and its current exhibition, *Lee and Grant*. Dr. Bryan noted that the exhibition has received criticism by a few who object to the balanced depiction of the historical figures, and that it is likely that the Commission may encounter similar objections as it plans commemorative activities that include Union, Confederate and African-American points of view. Commission members agreed that talking points developed by Dr. Bryan in regard to *Lee and Grant* offer guidance on how to respond to such criticism when it arises.

### **Jamestown 2007**

Leaders of the Jamestown 2007 activities shared advice and lessons learned in planning a statewide commemoration for the benefit of Commission members. Phil Emerson, Executive Director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF), offered an overview of planning structure. In 1996, the General Assembly designated the JYF as the lead agency in coordinating the Jamestown quadricentennial. As a result, the Board of Trustees appointed the Jamestown 2007 Steering Committee to direct the planning efforts. In addition, a federal Jamestown 400 Commemoration Commission was created by Congress in 2000 to ensure a successful national observance of the anniversary. Other planning entities were: (i) the Jamestown 2007 Management Committee, which oversaw coordination of efforts between the state and federal commissions; (ii) the Jamestown 2007 Executive Committee, which was a sub-set of the larger Steering Committee; and (iii) the Historic Triangle Jamestown 2007 Host Committee. Two sites are primarily associated with the commemoration: Historic Jamestowne, jointly administered by the National Park Service and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and Jamestown Settlement, a state-owned living history museum of 17th-century Virginia located adjacent to Historic Jamestowne.

Jeanne Zeidler, Executive Director of the Jamestown 2007 Office, discussed partnerships and statewide initiatives, and planning steps. Key to success over the 10-year planning period was the involvement of the citizens of Virginia, which was accomplished through statewide roundtable discussions, and the formation of subcommittees and working groups. Another early strategy for creating awareness, building support and involving citizens statewide was the development of a Speakers Bureau. Volunteers were recruited first to tell the story of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Speakers Bureau became a useful tool for building the most extensive of the statewide programs, the Virginia 2007 Community Program, which eventually consisted of 181 official communities who adopted legacy projects that have a lasting impact on the community. Projects varied as widely, from new visitor centers and museums to festivals, exhibits and more. Partnering with local, state, national, and international groups was also key to the commemoration's success.

Planning was divided into three distinct categories:

1 - Planning phase (1996 - 2003): Key during this period was development and implementation of the *Joint Jamestown Mission Statement*. The various committees held roundtables and brainstormed ideas.

2 - Program development (2003-2006): The Committee progressed from concept into planning actual programs and events, launched a development campaign, and created a marketing communications program. The "message" became America's 400th Anniversary, and its lasting legacies of Jamestown, democracy, free enterprise, and cultural diversity. In addition, relationships with important stakeholders in the Native American and African American communities were solidified.

3 - Implementation/Production (2006-2007): An 18-month period of intense activity with widely acclaimed results.

Ms. Zeidler shared several important lessons: (i) the Speakers Bureau program must be carefully monitored and evaluated; (ii) involvement of communities is beneficial in bringing new organizations and projects to the table, but also must be carefully overseen to achieve full potential; (iii) two grant programs will support effective statewide participation: (a) matching grants to communities, and (b) cooperative advertising dollars administered by the Va. Tourism Corporation; and (iv) being inclusive in planning is important, but realize that plans evolve and for every five good ideas, only one will work.

### **Teacher Preparation for the Sesquicentennial**

Members of the Commission had previously expressed interest in developing programs to inspire teachers and prepare them for the sesquicentennial. The Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Park Service both have programs that accomplish such a goal. Teacher Institutes combine workshops with "field trips" to battlefields to prepare teachers to better communicate the history of the Civil War to students. The CWPT offered to collaborate with the Commission to design and implement new Teacher Institute programs during the sesquicentennial. In addition, the National Park Service has piloted a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program, in which a teacher is selected by the locality to work in a national park for a summer. The teacher is paid a stipend, and performs tasks that are typical of park rangers. When the assignment is complete, the teacher returns to the classroom with a renewed interest in and appreciation for national parks, which is then shared in the classroom. Participating teachers are asked to wear the NPS uniform during park recognition week in April, making presentations about the experience.

### **Document Digitization, Collection and Preservation**

Dr. Sandra Treadway, Librarian of Virginia, presented a proposal for a document digitization project that the Commission has previously endorsed in concept. The three-part, six-year program would focus on locating Civil War-era materials currently in private hands, scanning them, and suggesting possible repositories for permanent retention of original materials. The digital collection assembled during the sesquicentennial would become an enduring product of the Commission to be available on the Commission's website, and after 2015, through the Library of Virginia's website. The project would begin in 2010 with the hiring of a full-time

project coordinator who would publicize the project throughout the state and plan its logistics. Once underway, a processing archivist would be hired for cataloging and description of the collections. Scanning capabilities would be available on-site at local repositories, especially targeting individuals who are not willing to donate their collections.

A preliminary budget for the project is \$665,432. Staff of the Library of Virginia and the Commission will work on securing additional funding for the project outside of general fund appropriations. A motion to approve the digitization project in concept was made by Del. Landes, and seconded by Del. Eisenberg. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Staff Reports**

Cheryl Jackson, Project Manager and Staff Coordinator, reported on interim activities. Brochures have been created to send to interested parties, many of whom contact the Commission through its website. Staff will be augmented through a partnership with VCU to provide history interns to the Commission. Ms. Jackson discussed plans for the upcoming meetings of Workgroup 1 (Coordination), chaired by Sen. Chichester, and Workgroup 2 (Signature Events and Activities), chaired by Speaker Howell. Plans for annual Signature Conferences are underway, with the first ("*The Coming of the Civil War*") to be held at the University of Richmond in April 2009. Dr. Edward L. Ayres has agreed to chair the conference. In addition, the first Signature Tour, which will serve as the kickoff for the national sesquicentennial commemoration, has been set for June 25-26, 2009 at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Brenda Edwards, Senior Research Associate, delivered the report of Workgroup 3 (Education), chaired by Del. A. T. Howell.

Danielle Watkins, Development Officer, presented a case statement that will serve as the foundation for the Commission's development efforts. During the fundraising process, the case statement is an initial request from a potential donor to gain a better understanding of the Commission's mission, goals, objectives, and funding opportunities. A motion to adopt the case statement was made by Del. Lingamfelter, and seconded by Del. Landes. The motion passed unanimously.

Development staff have also established a phased campaign for fundraising, and begun identifying foundations whose fields of interest are in line with the mission, goals and objectives of the Commission. Last, staff is working closely with the National Endowment for the Humanities for grant-funding of many of the Commission's initiatives.

## **Report of the Executive Committee**

Speaker Howell offered a report of the Executive Committee, which met earlier in the week. The following items were approved:

1. Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan, which pulls together the Commission's statutory mandate, goals, objectives and tentative plans, was reviewed. A motion to adopt the Strategic Plan was made by Del. Landes, and seconded by Sen. Locke. The motion passed.

## 2. Special license plate

Legislation which, if enacted by the General Assembly, would authorize a revenue-sharing special license plate for the sesquicentennial commemoration. Modeled on the Jamestown special license plate legislation, a one-time \$15.00 fee is imposed on the purchaser of the license plate, of which \$5.00 goes to the Commission's special fund and \$10.00 goes to DMV to cover administrative costs. The bill would exempt the Commission from the provisions of § 46.2-725, which require (i) 350 pre-paid applications before the license is made, and (ii) 1,000 license plates be sold before revenue is shared.

A motion to approve the draft legislation for introduction in the 2008 Session of the General Assembly was made by Sen. Howell, and seconded by Del. A. T. Howell. The motion passed unanimously.

## Civil War Preservation Trust

Speaker Howell introduced a resolution endorsing the Sesquicentennial Battlefield Initiative of the Civil War Preservation Trust. A motion to adopt the resolution was made by Del. Lingamfelter, and seconded by Del. Landes. The motion passed unanimously.