

VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION
Summary of Workgroup 2 - Signature Events and Activities
December 3, 2007

Members Present:

Speaker William J. Howell, Chair

Senator R. Creigh Deeds

Delegate Johnny S. Joannou

Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr.

The Honorable Viola O. Baskerville, Secretary of Administration

Dr. Edward D.C. "Kip" Campbell, Deputy Librarian of Virginia

Graham Dozier, Assistant Editor of Publications, Virginia Historical Society

Prof. Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., Associate Professor in the History of the American Civil War, UVA

Richard Lewis, National Public Relations Manager, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Dr. John W. Mountcastle, Ret. Brig. Gen., Army Chief of Military History, Univ. of Richmond

Dr. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, President, Sweet Briar College

Speaker Howell called the meeting to order and stated that the purpose was to update members on planning to date, and further discuss and refine the Signature Conference proposal that members have been reviewing.

Staff Report - Cheryl Jackson

In addition to providing brief updates on activity in the other workgroups and the full Commission, Ms. Jackson provided an update on plans that are under the purview of Workgroup 2:

Traveling Museum Exhibit: *"Virginia's Civil War: America's Great Turning Point"* consisting of a total of 4000 square feet and two parts, will open at the VHS in Richmond in 2011, and then travel during the next three years to Roanoke, Abingdon, Lynchburg, Fredericksburg, Winchester, Manassas, and Hampton. The two components consist of the battlefield and the homefront, which will travel to each museum at different times. Andrew Talkov has been hired as Exhibit Coordinator by the Virginia Historical Society, and will continue to report progress regularly to the Commission.

DVD project: A joint venture between the Va. Tech Center for Civil War Studies and Blue Ridge Public Television to create a three-hour DVD on Virginia and the Civil War. The DVD would be produced for the use of schools and would consist of nine 20-minute segments, including: coming of war, military campaigns (3), the African-American experience, life of the common soldiers, personalities, the home front (including women and medicine), and the legacy of the war. The DVD will be distributed free of charge to every school, library, historical society, and archive in the state beginning in August 2009. This project has been fully funded by the Commission, and Va. Tech is working with Blue Ridge Public Television to begin production of the DVD.

Document Collection, Preservation and Digitization Project: The Library of Virginia proposes leading a three-part, six-year program that 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 throughout the state.

The project was approved in concept by Commission at its meeting in November. Staff of the Library of Virginia and the Commission will work on securing additional funding for the project outside of general fund appropriations.

HistoryMobile project: The task force is continuing to gather data about tractor trailers, logistical needs, etc. Staff met with Prosody Creative Services, who made a proposal for taking over the planning, but decided to keep the planning in-house, with an the idea of possibly engaging an event planner during the tour. Jennifer Carnham has been added to the task force, bringing a great deal of knowledge from a previous mobile tour. Development staff will continue looking for sponsorship opportunities, and the task force will make a recommendation once all of the budget needs and logistical details have been identified.

Signature Tours : The National Endowment for the Humanities is interested in discussing a three-way partnership between the Commission, the National Park Service, and the NEH, to develop interactive and engaging webcast battlefield tours for the Internet.

The Commission has scheduled a kickoff tour event in Harper's Ferry for June 25 - 26, 2009, at the invitation of West Virginia legislative leadership. Harper's Ferry staff are supportive of the Commission's plans, and are working together in every way to plan a joint commemorative event that will complement, not compete with, existing plans for the 150th anniversary John Brown's raid on the United States arsenal. The joint meeting in June would effectively serve as the kickoff for the sesquicentennial for Virginia, West Virginia and the nation, in the absence of federal action. Tentative plans call for: (i) a joint meeting of Virginia-West Virginia government officials, with presentations that offer an overview of the primacy of Harper's Ferry in the Civil War; (ii) meeting with media representatives to obtain national press coverage for the kickoff; (iii) a reception and lecture dinner; and (iv) tours of Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, including: the federal armory; lower town of Harper's Ferry, including the site of an ongoing archeological dig ; and the nearby battlefields at Bolivar Heights and School House Ridge

Signature Conferences: The first signature conference ("*The Coming of the Civil War*") will be held in spring 2009 at the University of Richmond, with Dr. Edward L. Ayres to

chair. The chairman of the Commission accepted Dr. Ayres' offer to serve as host institution, due to the pressing time constraints involved in planning such an event. However, letters of intent will be sent to public and private accredited colleges throughout the state, to indicate interest in serving as host institution for ensuing conferences.

Roundtable Discussion of Signature Conferences and Tours

Members reviewed feedback on Signature Conferences and themes, giving tentative approval to establishing the topic of the annual spring conference as the annual theme for the statewide commemoration:

2009 - The Coming of the War
2010 - African-Americans and the Civil War
2011 - American Military Strategy and the Civil War
2012 - The Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac
2013 - The Homefront in the Civil War
2014 - The Civil War in a Global Context
2015 - The Promise of Freedom: Memory of the Civil War

In addition to themes such as these that highlight social, or strategic, aspects of the Civil War the Commission will also establish military, or tactical, themes in an effort to appeal to broad audiences with diverse interests. The Virginia Tourism Corporation will test the themes as it develops a marketing plan for the Commission.

Members were asked to continue to review the proposals, submitting comments to staff for compilation. Several members will work together to draft a position paper that supports the Commission's plans for an inclusive commemoration that discusses all aspects of the Civil War, including the Union, Confederate and African-American perspectives.

Culmination Event

Members began discussing plans for a culmination event to be held in Appomattox in April 2015 ("*One Nation Indivisible*") that would be national in scope, with invitees including the President of the United States and Governors of the states. The event is intended to weave past, present and future together, and may focus on topics such as: (i) the United States emerging from the brink of implosion at end of the Civil War to become the strongest nation in the world; (ii) the war's legacy of freedom for slaves and the ensuing years of African-American struggle; and (iii) the enduring influence of the Civil War on the United States and its implications for our future.