

Proposed Signature Tours

Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

The Commission may wish to consider sponsoring a series of signature tours, including battlefield tours as well as historical tours of particular cities, regions, or sites in Virginia which played a prominent role in the Civil War. These tours could be held in conjunction with regular meetings of the Commission. For example, a commission meeting, with a reception and dinner, might be held the night before the tour, with local participation. A keynote speaker might provide an introduction for each tour. The city or regional tours could take a broader view of the Civil War era, and include the most significant sites in that particular area. The battlefield tours might be scheduled one or two months prior to the actual commemoration dates of the battles, in order to raise public awareness in advance of events which may be planned locally. In each case, local government officials and the media should be included, along with the local Civil War sesquicentennial committee, if one has been appointed, and representatives of local colleges and universities, and museums. Efforts should also be made to involve students and young persons.

June 25-26, 2009: Kick-Off Tour in Harpers Ferry

Focus: The Commission's first tour is being planned in conjunction with a series of events commemorating John Brown's raid (October 17, 1859). This tour will include an evening reception and dinner, a panel presentation, and the tour. In addition to the lower town of Harpers Ferry and the site of the federal arsenal, the tour may include Bolivar Heights, Schoolhouse Ridge and the Murphy Farm, covering Stonewall Jackson's victory of September 15, 1862, immediately preceding the Battle of Antietam. This event is being planned in cooperation with the State of West Virginia and the National Park Service.

Location: Harper's Ferry, West Virginia

Partners: State of West Virginia and the National Park Service

September 2009 - The Civil War in Hampton Roads

Focus: This tour would provide an overview of the Civil War in Hampton Roads, focusing on Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton and Newport News, with special emphasis on the naval aspects of the war, including the naval shipyard in Portsmouth, the Mariners Museum and the Monitor Center, as well as Fort Monroe.

May 2010: The Civil War in Southwestern Virginia

Focus: This tour would be designed to generate public interest in the Civil War sesquicentennial in Southwest Virginia, covering sites from Dublin and Wytheville to Cloyd's Mountain, and Saltville.

September 2010: The Civil War in Northern Virginia

Focus: This tour would provide an overview of the Civil War in Northern Virginia, inside the Union lines, with a series of stops at significant sites occupied by Union forces, including Old Town Alexandria, Arlington House, and Forts Ward and C. F. Smith.

March-April 2011: The Civil War in Richmond

Focus: This tour would focus on the home front in the Capital of the Confederacy from the different perspectives of Unionists, Confederates, and African-Americans. Tour stops might include homes, hospitals, and prisons; the American Civil War Center at Tredegar Iron Works; the White House of the Confederacy, and the Virginia Historical Society. The tour might also highlight the meetings of the Confederate Congress in the State Capitol.

June 2011: First and Second Manassas

Focus: This tour would highlight significant Civil War events and sites at Fairfax Courthouse, the City of Manassas, and Prince William County, with stops focusing on the campaigns of First Manassas (July 1861), and Second Manassas (August 25-30, 1862).

September 2011: The Civil War in Southside Virginia

Focus: This tour would provide an overview of the war from the perspective of Central and Southside Virginians, focusing on Lynchburg and Danville, the role of the railroads in the war, and the last days of the Confederacy, including the White House of the Confederacy in Danville.

March-April 2012: Jackson's Valley Campaign

Focus: This tour would focus on the 1862 Valley Campaign (March-June 1862), and the key battlefields and other historic sites, including Kernstown, Cross Keys and Port Republic, in partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.

May-June 2012: The Seven Days

Focus: This tour would emphasize the emergence of Robert E. Lee as the leader of the Army of Northern Virginia, from the Battle of Seven Pines/Fair Oaks (May 31, 1862), to Mechanicsville/Beaver Dam Creek, Gaines Mill, Savage Station, Glendale/Fraser's Farm, and Malvern Hill (June 25-July 1, 1862), and Harrison's Landing.

October-November 2012: The Fredericksburg Campaign

Focus: This tour would provide an overview of the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 11-13, 1862).

March-April 2013: Chancellorsville: Lee's Greatest Victory

Focus: This tour would cover the Battle of Chancellorsville, April 27-May 6, 1863.

May-June 2013: The Journey Through Hallowed Ground

Focus: This tour would highlight the newly-designated driving tour along U.S. Route 15, from Leesburg through Warrenton, Culpeper, Orange, Gordonsville and Charlottesville, and the many historic sites along this corridor involving Native American and African American history, Presidential homes, and battlefields. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the appreciation of this uniquely American cultural landscape, stretching from Gettysburg to Charlottesville.

September 2013 - The Civil War in the Northern Piedmont

Focus: This tour would focus on historic sites in Orange, Culpeper, Fauquier and Loudoun Counties, including the Battle of Brandy Station (June 9, 1863); the exploits of John Singleton Mosby's Rangers; and, if time permits, possibly other battlefield sites such as Kelly's Ford, Rappahannock Station, and Mine Run.

March-April 2014 - The Overland Campaign

Focus: This tour would highlight the campaigns in May and June, 1864, from the Wilderness to Spotsylvania Courthouse, and on to the North Anna River and Cold Harbor, and would end at Grant's crossing of the James.

May-June 2014 - The Siege of Petersburg

Focus: This tour would provide an overview of the extended siege of Petersburg between June 1864 and April 1865, including the many significant battles during this period; life in the Union and Confederate trenches; the role of African-Americans on both sides; Grant's headquarters at City Point; Pamplin Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier; and, selected historic sites in downtown Petersburg.

September 2014 - The 1864 Valley Campaign

Focus: This tour would focus on the 1864 campaign between Jubal Early and Phil Sheridan in the Shenandoah, including Cool Spring (July 18); Second Kernstown (July 24); Third Winchester (September 19); Fisher's Hill (September 22); Tom's Brook (October 9); Cedar Creek (October 19); and, the burning of the Valley.

April 2015 - Lee's Retreat and Appomattox

Focus: This tour would highlight the final days of Lee's Retreat, including Amelia Courthouse, the Battle of Sailor's Creek, and the surrender at Appomattox (April 9, 1865). This might be combined with the concluding meeting of the commission as a special commemorative event.