

For immediate release

Date: January 19, 2006
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LEE MEMORIAL COMMISSION PRESS CONFERENCE

January 19, 2006 --Delegate Benjamin A. Cline and Senator Emmett W. Hanger Jr., co-chairmen of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Commission of the Commonwealth, and other members of the Commission, celebrated Robert E. Lee's 199th birthday by announcing plans to commemorate his 200th birthday.

The plans for the 200th birthday celebration include a variety of educational efforts and activities that will last throughout 2007. The goals of the Commission are to develop and support educational efforts about all facets of Lee's life and his legacy in the Commonwealth, and to support and promote tourism in the Commonwealth with a variety of activities, events, and programs. Robert E. Lee's legacy of honor and leadership, and his commitment to education and religion, have touched all areas of the Commonwealth. This broad legacy makes it especially appropriate to honor Lee's 200th birthday with events around the state, and throughout the 2007 year.

It is especially meaningful that Lee's 200th birthday coincides with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Virginia's founding. The Jamestown 2007 celebration will celebrate not just the events that lead to the landing in Jamestown in 1607, but also Virginia's rich 400-year history and its evolution to where it is today. Certainly Robert E. Lee played an important role in shaping Virginia traditions. The Commission hopes that the events and activities planned to celebrate Robert E. Lee's 200th birthday will add to the Jamestown 2007 celebrations by highlighting an important historical figure.

The Lee Memorial Commission plans to commission a print of Robert E. Lee to sell to memorialize the year-long celebration. A print has not yet been finalized, but it is hoped that perhaps a lesser-known image of Lee might be chosen to help educate about an unknown facet of Lee's life.

Many organizations around the Commonwealth are planning events and activities to celebrate Lee's life, including Stratford Hall, Arlington House, Washington and Lee University, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Museum of the Confederacy. Some activities include:

- A Lee Memorial Commission "kick-off" event, perhaps sometime in the summer of 2006;
- A celebration in January 19, 2007 of Lee's 200th birthday; including Stratford Hall's annual candlelight memorial;

- A United Daughters of the Confederacy-sponsored tour of Richmond, visiting historical sites related to Lee in and around the city on March 11, 2007;
- A Lee-Grant Exhibition planned to open in Fall, 2007. This is a joint effort of the Virginia Historical Society and the New York Historical Society, and the exhibit will travel around the country;
- A "Lee in Lexington" day on October 12, 2007. This event is being planned by the Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy
- A tourism program promoting sites of interest around the Commonwealth related to Robert E. Lee, to assist families traveling in and around Virginia to create itineraries and learn more about Lee;
- An academic symposium at Washington & Lee University focusing on Robert E. Lee; and
- Educational initiatives, which might include a teachers institute at the Museum of the Confederacy, efforts to develop curriculum materials that focus on history, civics, and leadership that could be incorporated into the Standards of Learning, and essay or poster contests.

The Commission will compile a brochure to disseminate state-wide to promote the various events, and will develop a Lee Memorial Commission website that can serve as a focal point of the planning and promotion. Work will continue throughout 2006 to plan and coordinate these and additional events, and the Commission welcomes public input, participation, and suggestions. The events and activities listed above are just the beginning of what the Commission hopes to be an educational and exciting year celebrating Robert E. Lee.

The Lee Memorial Commission was established by House Joint Resolution 710 and Senate Joint Resolution 382 by the 2005 General Assembly to plan and coordinate the celebration of Robert E. Lee's 200th birthday on January 19, 2007. In addition to Delegate Cline and Senator Hanger, other members include Delegate Robert Hurt, Delegate Lynwood W. Lewis, Jr., Delegate Thomas C. Wright, Jr., Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr., and representatives of Washington and Lee University, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, the Confederate Memorial Literary Society, the Virginia Division of Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the Virginia Division of United Daughters of the Confederacy, as well as the Director of the Department of Historic Resources, the Director of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The press conference was held at the Stewart-Lee House on 707 East Franklin Street in Richmond. The Stewart-Lee House, now home to the Home Builders Association of Virginia, occupied by Lee's son, was occupied by Martha Custis Lee, Lee's wife, in 1864, and Lee resided there after the Civil War. The well-known Matthew Brady photo of Lee standing alone on porch was taken on the lower back porch of the home.

For more information or questions about the work of the Lee Memorial Commission, contact Lisa Wallmeyer at the Division of Legislative Services at (804) 786-3591 or llwallmeyer@leg.state.va.us.