

## Summary

Virginia Commission on the Bicentennial of the War of 1812, Richmond  
June 6, 2010 and August 17, 2010



The Virginia Commission on the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 met on June 6 and August 17 in Richmond to continue refining its plans, goals, and objectives for the statewide commemoration of the war. The Commission's meetings were preceded by the meeting of its Citizen's Advisory Council. The Commission noted that, while the War of 1812 is the nation's second war for independence, it is commonly called "The Forgotten War," and considerable work is needed to educate citizens concerning the significance of the war to contemporary national policies, homeland security, and diplomacy.

### **Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail**

In May 2008 Congress amended the National Trails System Act (P.L. 110-229) which designates the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail to commemorate the "Chesapeake Bay Campaign of the War of 1812 and events leading up to the writing of the Star-Spangled Banner, including the British invasion of Maryland, Battle of Bladensburg, and burning of the White House, Capitol, and Washington Navy Yard, and the Battle for Baltimore in the summer of 1814. The national trail follows 290 miles of land and water routes in Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland along which the British and Americans traveled and fought during the Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812. The Trail purposes are to foster preservation and interpretation of Trail resources and to enhance recreational opportunities for the public. The designation includes Tangier and Alexandria, and Trail interpretation and access will likely be explored along the Virginia shores of the Potomac and include interpretation of the flight of the Madisons and rescue of the national documents. The various skirmishes that happened along the shores of the Chesapeake in Virginia could be interpreted through the Trail as well," according the National Park Service.

### **Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail**

After meeting with representatives of the National Park Services' Star-Spangled Banner Historical Trail, the Citizens Advisory Council concluded and reported to the Commission that national initiatives to commemorate the bicentennial of the war, specifically the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, focus primarily on events that occurred in Maryland in the Chesapeake Bay Campaign to the exclusion of Virginia and its prominent role in the war. After an exhaustive and unsuccessful effort on the part of the Commission and Council to rectify the proposed plans for the national trail to include Virginia, the Commission has opted instead to pursue state-focused commemorative events, programs, and activities that accurately record and showcase Virginia's role and vast contributions to the war and by creating the Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail through the use of historical markers.

The Commission will build the state trail by adding new historical markers to existing markers related to the War of 1812 throughout the State. Citizens Advisory Council members were requested to submit suggestions for the new historical markers to render a complete account of the impact of the war in Virginia and to designate significant sites and recognize the contributions of relevant historical characters. Of the several suggestions offered by the Council, 15 new historical markers were recommended by the Department and adopted by the Commission, to commence the state trail, including the erection of historic markers for Elizabeth Monroe and Dolley Madison, and to recognize the African American contributions to the war. The 15 new markers are: Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott; Lt. Col. George Armistead; Dolley Payne Madison; Impact on African Americans (Tangier Island); Cockburn on the Chesapeake; Military/Naval Legacy (Fort Monroe); Opposition (John Randolph); Sack of Hampton; Attack on Dolphin, Arab, Racer, and Lynx; Mundy's Point/Kinsale (focus: participation of former slaves); Pleasure House/Normini Ferry/Tappahannock etc.; Declaration of Independence hiding site; Harbor (Forts Norfolk, Nelson); Richmond Defenses (Camps Fairfield, Carter, Holly Springs, Ft. Powhatan); and British naval blockade (Cape Henry light).

### **Montpelier: Prelude to the Bicentennial**

The bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812 will be a comprehensive, balanced, and "statewide" observance of Virginia's role in the war, giving appropriate recognition to all regions of the Commonwealth and Virginia's leaders during that era, such as the Virginia Militia, the Petersburg Volunteers, the Chesapeake Bay Campaign, the Sack of Hampton and British occupation of Alexandria, Presidents James Madison, James Monroe, and William Henry Harrison, Dolley Madison and Elizabeth Monroe, Craney Island, and Tangier Island. The prelude to Virginia's commemoration will begin in March 2011 at Montpelier on the occasion of the Presidential Wreath Laying Ceremony for President James Madison. Planning is underway for this and other events.

### **Virginia OpSail 2012**

OpSail 2012 is one of the Commission's signature events for the bicentennial commemoration. Karen Scherberger, Executive Director, Norfolk Festevents, reported that Operation Sail, Inc. (OpSail) and the U.S. Navy have announced the participation of five historic U.S. ports that will participate in the commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the birth of The Star-Spangled Banner. The ports of call are New Orleans, Norfolk/Hampton, Baltimore, and Boston, and New York during Fleet Week. The United Kingdom and Canada, nations involved in the War of 1812, NATO countries, and other nations with tall ships are also participating in the commemoration. The City of Norfolk and the Port of Hampton Roads will host the OpSail flotilla from June 6-11, 2012, in conjunction with Norfolk's annual Harborfest celebration. The U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army are also partners in the commemoration. Given the enormous economic development, national and international public relations opportunities that OpSail 2012 presents for the Commonwealth, the Commission, and working assiduously with the many participants in OpSail 2012, the Commission is striving aggressively to maximize this singular opportunity to promote the Commonwealth and ensure its visibility during the national commemoration.

### **Legacy Symposium 2014**

Plans for a significant two-day symposium are being developed as a concluding signature event for Virginia bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812. The Commission's Legacy Symposium will be hosted by Fort Monroe in June 2014. A steering committee and various work groups composed of representatives from relevant state agencies, business and industry, the military, public and higher education, historical societies, local governing bodies, and others will be appointed to assist the Commission in planning and implementation of the symposium.

### **Commemorative Work Plan**

The commemorative work plan includes numerous activities designed to promote the participation of all Virginians in the bicentennial commemoration, including exhibits, book signings, supplemental educational materials for students and teachers, the preservation of historic records, identification of War of 1812 veteran gravesites in Virginia, and symphonic celebrations. Significantly, dedication events to highlight each historical marker added to the state Heritage Trail will be held, and an affair to remember the British invasion of Hampton in 1813 and other related events in the Hampton Roads region are being developed. To further outreach and publicize the bicentennial in Virginia, the Commission has established a Facebook page; a logo designed at Hampden-Sydney is being used to brand the Commission's programs and events; a commemorative brochure citing Virginia's role in the War of 1812 will be published; and a new website will soon be launched that will include among other things historical facts and an interactive timeline and map of War of 1812 events in Virginia that will allow scholars, students, teachers, citizens, and visitors to access information about battle sites and events related to the war, as well as allow the traveler to plan an itinerary to visit points of interest. In addition to the aforementioned endeavors, the Commission is developing a traveling exhibit and documentary, will issue scholarly publications and op eds about the war, foster relationships with England, Canada, and Virginia's Native American Tribes to solicit and encourage their participation in the commemoration, explore collaborative ventures with other states that are commemorating the bicentennial, solicit the cooperation of the U.S. Army and Virginia National Guard, recommend the creation of a commemorative license plate, and encourage local governing bodies to participate in and pass resolutions recognizing the commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

**Next Meetings**

The Commission has scheduled the following meetings on Wednesday, October 19, 2010: Brochure Work Group at 10:00 a.m., the Citizens Advisory Council at 11:00 a.m., and full Commission at 2:30 p.m. in House Room C in the General Assembly Building.

Chairman:

The Hon. M. Kirkland Cox

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