

## VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION

**Advisory Council Meeting  
Dr. Sandy Treadway, Chair  
June 24, 2008**

### Summary

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#### Morning Session

Members of the Advisory Council were welcomed by Dr. Sandy Treadway, Librarian of Virginia, who was named by the Commission as its liaison to the Advisory Council. Staff presented an overview of the Commission and its plans to date, including:

- Commission membership, structure and organization
- Advisory Council 2007 recommendations and critical guiding principles
- Strategic plan: Goals for the commemoration
- Authorization of a revenue-sharing license plate
- Initiating fundraising activities
- Launching an eight-year strategic marketing plan coordinated by the VTC
- Coordinating statewide sites, activities and events: The Commission will lead the linkage, coordination, unification, and support of existing museums and sites, in lieu of building a new facility for the sesquicentennial. It will promote Civil War destinations through an interactive website, computer kiosks, maps and publications with the goal of making travel easy for visitors
- Working with each locality as they form local sesquicentennial committees (55/134)
- Fully funding a sesquicentennial-oriented DVD to be produced by Blue Ridge Public Television and the Virginia Tech Center for Civil War Studies that will be distributed free of charge to every school, library and historical society. Designed for teacher use in the classroom, it will contain nine segments, including: background of the war, military campaigns, African-American experience, leading Virginia personalities, common soldiers, home front activities, and legacy of the war.
- Funding a competitive micro-grant program for local sesquicentennial committees.
- Partnering with the National Park Service to develop Internet Battlefield Tours.
- Exploring the idea of a mobile museum exhibition, the *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile*, which would travel the state.
- Working with the education community to create teacher resources, curriculum development, and to ensure that the inclusive message of the commemoration reaches into the schools.

Andrew Talkov, Sesquicentennial Exhibit Coordinator at the Virginia Historical Society, offered a detailed description of the museum exhibition, tentatively entitled, "*An American Turning*

*Point: The Civil War in Virginia.*" Rich in artifacts, documents, and high-tech components, the exhibition will be divided into battlefield and home front stories. It will open at the VHS in February 2011, then is tentatively scheduled to travel throughout the sesquicentennial to museums in Roanoke, Abingdon, Lynchburg, Fredericksburg, Winchester, Manassas and Hampton. Panel exhibitions will also be developed to compliment the museum exhibition. It was suggested by the Advisory Council that six identical panel exhibitions be created: one to travel out of state to generate interest in Virginia Civil War sites, and five to travel throughout the state according to the Civil War Trails regions (i.e., one to remain in each of the five Civil War Trails regions). The Commission has begun funding this project and is exploring other partnerships.

Dr. Edward D.C. Campbell, Deputy Librarian of Virginia, presented information on the Sesquicentennial Legacy Project. The Commission has approached the Library of Virginia to partner for a major initiative to identify, collect, catalogue and preserve Civil War documents that are currently held in private collections through digitization. The Library proposes to hire two staff members to run the program, working through the local library system and local sesquicentennial committees to publicize it. There is strong evidence that this is one of the best, and possibly last, opportunities to preserve these treasured documents for generations to come. The Library of Virginia is working with the Commission to secure funding for the project.

### **Afternoon Session**

Greg Brittingham from Virginia Commonwealth University facilitated the afternoon session, which focused on generating feedback and responses to a number of questions posed by the Commission.

The Commission is not sponsoring battle re-enactments. What, if any, role should the Commission play relevant to the anniversary of major battles?

### **Education (Adult and Classroom)**

- Develop symposia in advance of the anniversary date (e.g., generate discussion about the battle, its outcome, etc.)
- Sponsor symposia connected to time/place of event
- Seek industry sponsorship to lectures linked to an aspect of the battle (ex. Aerospace industry could sponsor lectures about balloon surveillance)
- Web section dedicated to major battles
- Sponsor teacher tours in connection with events
- Develop civilian "staff rides" with U.S. Army
  - o especially teachers - grants to fund participation of teachers funded by donors/foundations

### **Public relations**

- Place mobile unit and kiosks at events
- Timing: announce preservation and conservation initiatives coupled with events/anniversary dates

As of now, 55 of the 134 localities have responded to the invitation to form a local sesquicentennial committee. We are finding that many of the people "on the ground" in local tourism offices or historical societies understand the importance of the commemoration and want to be involved. The same level of enthusiasm is not always present among local government administrators and elected officials. How can the Commission help bridge this gap and get more localities to participate? What is the role of Commission in overseeing local committees?

Encouraging localities to participate:

- Re-contact city/county governments
- Simultaneously contact local school board, tourism staff, historical society
- Personalize approach
- Staff support for selling project
- VML, VACO- peer to peer - ask for presence at VACO, VML conferences
- Enlist help from legislators from the area
- Re-enforce that historic preservation means better opportunities, enhances quality of life, fosters community pride
- Show importance of local committee:
  - o Publicize grant program
  - o Show that every town has a connection - - even through veterans who served
  - o Connect to local committees through HistoryMobile
  - o Make 5 sets of panels from museum exhibition to stay/travel within the CW Trails regions.

Role of Commission: Establish standards

- Approval process to use logo (control of logo demonstrates that other historic resources meet an established standard)
- Organization must agree to follow core guiding principles
- Must conform to receive grant
- All events must be reviewed and approved

Sidenote discussion: How do we get the Richmond area more involved?

- State influence
- Use exhibits at the State Capitol to lead by example - have them up and going in time for sesquicentennial
- Involve Virginia Main Street program (historic towns) - Dept. of Historic Resources

Some potential donors and members of the community wonder why we are even bothering to talk about the Civil War, much less spend time, money and effort on its commemoration, and suggest that it is a topic better left to the past. How can we “market” the sesquicentennial to create a buzz and make people (especially would-be donors) understand just *why* this is so important?

Communicating importance - Generally:

- Share the story- use the Civil War to involve people, the bigger American story
- What is the unifying theme (tagline) of the Commission and its partners? There is feeling this does not yet exist. (e.g. "America: Reborn in Virginia"; "The Journey from 'United States *are*' to 'United States *is*'"; “Real Stuff - - Real places - - Real History”; "Virginia: The Bigger American Story")
- Identifying the theme makes it easier to create ‘buzz’
- Perhaps focus on the American founding ideals and how they played and play out in American culture. “America Reborn” (in Virginia)
- Defining the ideals- issues with citizenship, etc. “The Embers still Burn” important to understand and communicate the continuum.
- Funding is key! Can’t create the buzz without adequate funding.
- How do you contend with notion that the issues of the war continues- and it is not positive
- It becomes important to address the “people stories,” there must be relevancy/connection
- Show that the Civil War has a natural constituency that neither 1812 nor Jamestown 2007 has.
- The legacies of Civil War are so emotionally charged. What does it really take to convince people (including donors) that this commemoration is not more of the same?
- What lessons from Jamestown 2007 can we learn?
- Put together video that speaks to lessons of the Civil War (w/ scholars, students, individuals)

Communicating importance - Donor-specific:

- Show the return on investment - This is an investment in the community (or the state) by providing a collaboration of resources. It is a supporting of existing organizations *now*, helping them spread their message and make them even stronger for the *future*.
- Donors need to know what the products are, services, etc. that impact students and the community (What’s in it for them?)
- What are we marketing? What’s the experience we are attempting to sell? It is an opportunity to sell the states’ inventory of historic resources.
- Must be honest about what companies are reticent about topic and take it on, head on!
- Get the donor where they are!

What is the return of investment to sponsor/donor?

- Getting name out to community as a supporter
- Good will (not as strong of an argument – most do this)
- Community investment---- (Make sure that it's real!)
- Collaboration of resources: show impact and how their investment supports organizations across the state of various sizes
- Control of logo suggests other historic resources meet a standard

How will we position Virginia as *the* premier destination for visitors during the sesquicentennial? Fifty years from now, what do we want people to praise about our commemoration?

Positioning Visitors

- Virginia Civil War history is America's Civil War history (born at Jamestown; came of age during Civil War)
- Place ad campaigns in other states highlighting that Virginia was the only state to which every other state sent troops - - both Confederate states and United States
- African-American diaspora after Civil War. "Come Home" theme (e.g., museums and CW sites hold "Family Reunions")
- Don't sideline the quarterback (i.e., don't forget traditional icons like Lee, Jackson, Stuart) in quest for inclusiveness.
- Accept debate, disagreement, in order to raise awareness

Sesquicentennial Legacy

- Preserve and protect sites (e.g., Fort Monroe, battlefields): Preserve, Utilize & Sustain
- Learn to live with the stories of the Civil War
- Learn to live with the places of the Civil War
- Achieve harmony in discussions of the Civil War
- Tree plantings to commemorate casualties with the Civil War (JTHG initiative)
- Library of Virginia database/ archive of sesquicentennial staff
- H E Howard series made digital

What else? List other important topics, messages

- 1) Show technical advances and innovations made as a result of the Civil War
  - o Medical:
    - drugs
    - nursing
    - patient

- Mechanical:
  - naval
  - civil
  - mercantile
  
- Advances in science:
  - communication
  - aeronautic
  - musical
  
- Social/political
  - class
  - family
  
- 2) Foreign relations
  - Europe
  - Religious
  
- 3) Interactions of colleges and Universities
  - higher education and vocational training in the Civil War