

# VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION

## *Proposed Annual Themes for Signature Conferences, and Commission Meetings/Tours*

**This draft document is a work in progress.** It is intended to serve as a suggested road map for planning a series of Commission meetings around particular Civil War sites and themes during the Sesquicentennial years from 2008 through 2015. In each of these years, the Commission will sponsor one conference in addition to holding three or four meetings at selected locations across the Commonwealth.

An overarching theme will be set for each year, which will be the focus of the Signature Conference in the spring of that year. This conference theme will then be complemented by a military history theme and a cultural theme for the Commission meetings and tours during that year. These themes will provide the reference points for planning the substantive content for each commission meeting and tour, as appropriate to each specific location. Consistent with the goals of the Commission, meetings will include Union, Confederate and African-American perspectives, and cover both the battle front and the home front, in order to portray a fair and balanced story of Virginia in the Civil War.

### **The Commission's Proposed Annual Themes**

The Commission will organize its meetings around a series of themes for each year, beginning with an annual, overarching conference topic, which will then be supplemented with military history and cultural themes, as shown below. By carefully developing these themes, as appropriate to each local area of Virginia, the Commission intends to generate broad public interest in the Sesquicentennial across the entire Commonwealth.

#### **2009**

Conference	America on the Eve of the Civil War
Military History	Military Technology in the Nineteenth Century
Cultural <u>History</u>	Life in Virginia's Counties, Cities and Towns

#### **2010**

Conference	African-Americans and the Civil War
Military History	The Union Responds to Growing Sectional Tensions
Cultural <u>History</u>	Slavery and Freedmen in Virginia

#### **2011**

Conference	American Military Strategy and the Civil War
Military History	<del>Union Military Initiatives and the Confederate Response</del> <u>Mobilizing for War: The Opening Moves in the Virginia Theater</u>
Cultural <u>History</u>	<del>Mobilizing for War: The Calling and Training of the Armies</del> <u>The Road to Secession</u>

**2012**

Conference Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War  
Military History ~~The Maneuver Battles of the East, the Valley Campaign in the West~~  
The Valley Campaign and the Rise of the Army of Northern Virginia  
Cultural History Agriculture, Manufacturing and Commerce in Virginia

**2013**

Conference The Home Front in the Civil War  
Military History The Confederates Counter-Attack, and the Union Turns the Tide  
Cultural History Communications, Letters and News on the Home Front

**2014**

Conference Civil War in a Global Context  
Military History On to Richmond: The Burden on the Soldiers in the Field  
Cultural History The Strain of War on the Families and the Prisoners of War Communities

**2015**

Conference The Promise of Freedom: The Memory of the Civil War  
Military History The Fall of Richmond, Lee's Retreat, and Surrender  
Cultural History Reunion and Rebuilding on the Home Front

For each of these meetings, local government and the media should be included, along with the local Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee. These meetings may also provide opportunities to showcase the first public viewings of the Commission's proposed interactive webcast battlefield tours.

The Commission is seeking input and suggestions, along with proposals for organizational and logistical support, from all of Virginia's public and private colleges and universities, in order to encourage broad-based, creative partnerships with local governments, museums, and other interested groups to implement the road map over the years from 2008 through 2015. Speaker Howell wrote to each two-year and four-year public and private university in the state in December 2007 soliciting proposals for partnerships. Responses to the request for proposals are noted.

# ***The Promise of Freedom: The Legacy of the Civil War***

## **I. Proposed Signature Conferences**

(With partners noted)

### **2009 – "America on the Eve of the Civil War"**

**Focus:** This one-day conference will examine the situation of the United States in what turned out to be the eve of the Civil War, focusing on the central events and changes of the late antebellum era.

**Format:** The program will be conducted in an interactive format with speakers from varied perspectives: historians, directors of interpretive centers, heads of national park sites, and so on. Modeled along the lines of news shows such as *Face the Nation*, a moderator (Dr. Ayers) will guide a series of four panels (of 3 or 4 experts each) through selected topics that paint a picture of the nation prior to the Civil War. The proposed panels include: "John Brown's Raid," "The State of the Nation: The Census of 1859," "The Booming South," and "Predictions for the Coming Election of 1860." The panelists will assume a posture of speaking based on what Americans in 1859 would have known at the time, rather than what the audience knows now, 150 years after the fact.

**Chairman:** Dr. Ed Ayers  
**Location:** University of Richmond  
Robins Center  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 29, 2009

### **2010 – African-Americans and the Civil War**

**Proposed Focus:** The perspectives and contributions of African-Americans, both enslaved and free, during the Civil War, on slavery, the home front, the abolition sentiments since the Revolution and the roots of the abolition movement, the Underground Railroad, the role of African-Americans in the Union and Confederate Armies, emancipation and reconstruction. (A conference on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the United States Constitution has also been suggested by the workgroup on education.)

**Proposed Contact:** Dr. Cynthia Sellers, Hampton University  
*Suggestion:* Donald R. Shaffer, author of "After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans"  
**Proposed Location:** Hampton University

## **2011 – American Military Strategy and the Civil War**

**Proposed Focus:** The broad military strategies of both the Union and Confederate Armies in the Eastern Theatre, including the relative economic and military strengths and weaknesses of the Union and the Confederacy; the reasons why the North won and the South lost; Abraham Lincoln's and Jefferson Davis' leadership of their respective war efforts; the impact of the war in increasing the size and scope of both the United States and the Confederate governments; and, the impact of the Civil War on American military strategy and tactics.

**Proposed Contact:** Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.

**Proposed Location:** Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

*Suggestion: Involve Brig. Gen. (ret.) Jack Mountcastle, former Army Chief of Military History, and Dick Sommers, Army War College*

## **2012 – Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War**

**Proposed Focus:** The military history of the Army of Northern Virginia from the emergence of Robert E. Lee in 1862 through the end of the war, including an overview of the major battles in Virginia, as well as perspectives on the leadership qualities of Lee and his key lieutenants, his relations with the Confederate government, his staff, intelligence and supply operations, and his ability to maintain the morale of the Confederate soldiers through 1865 in the face of diminishing resources. The conference would also address the corresponding qualities of the Union Army of the Potomac, and the role of African-American troops, as well as leadership characteristics of President Lincoln (see *Team of Rivals*, Doris Kearns Goodwin). If possible, the conference should be scheduled at a time such that the participants could view a cadet parade on the drill field.

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**Proposed Contact:** Brig. Gen. Charles Brower

**Proposed Location:** Virginia Military Institute

## **2013 – The Home Front in the Civil War**

**Proposed Focus:** Life on the home front, including the impact of the war on women and the economic devastation of local communities in Virginia. This conference could highlight the Valley of the Shadow program developed by the University of Virginia, which provides web-based resources to study the impact of the war on two communities: Staunton, Virginia, and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

**Proposed Contact:** Dr. Peter Stearns

**Proposed Location:** George Mason University

## **2014 – Civil War in a Global Context**

**Proposed Focus:** International perspectives on civil war, including but not limited to the American Civil War, the impact of civil war on government, the military, and society, and the effect of civil war on the development of democratic institutions. This conference might also consider the diplomatic aspects of the American Civil War, including the involvement of the European Great Powers, including France and England, and the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation on international relations; as well as the diplomatic relations between the governments of the United States and the Confederate States of America and the unsuccessful negotiations for peace between the two governments.

**Proposed Contact:** Dr. Scott Nelson

**Proposed Location:** The College of William and Mary

## **2015 – The Promise of Freedom: The Memory of the Civil War**

**Proposed Focus:** The memory of the Civil War and the continuing debates over its meaning for all Americans today, including the development of the concept of the Lost Cause, the process of reconciliation, and current interpretations of the war from the Union, Confederate and African-American perspectives.

**Proposed Contact:** Dr. Gary Gallagher

**Proposed Location:** University of Virginia

## II. Commission Meetings/Tours

(With partners noted)

### **April 29, 2008: The Civil War in Winchester**

**Focus:** This meeting was planned in cooperation with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission, and was held at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. Following the meeting, the commission toured the Kernstown battlefield.

**Contact:** Howard Kittell  
**Location:** Museum of the Shenandoah Valley  
**Date:** April 29, 2008

### **June 10, 2008: Fort Monroe: "Freedom's Fortress"**

**Focus:** This meeting was held at the Officers Club on Fort Monroe and included a presentation by John Quarles on the history of Fort Monroe, and its significance in the Civil War. Following the meeting, the commission toured Fort Monroe and the Casemate Museum, including a presentation highlighting the decision of Union General Benjamin Butler that runaway slaves seeking shelter at Fort Monroe would be considered contraband of war, and not be returned to their former owners.

**Contact:** John Quarstein  
**Location:** Bay Breeze Officer's Club  
**Date:** June 10, 2008

### **September 9, 2008: Commission Meeting**

**Focus:** This was a working session in Richmond.

**Contact:** Cheryl Jackson  
**Location:** GAB, Speaker's Conference Room  
**Date:** September 9, 2008

### **November 17, 2008: The Civil War in Manassas**

**Focus:** This meeting would provide an opportunity for the commission to begin planning for a special commemorative meeting in the summer of 2012 focusing on the Battle of First Manassas, the opening major battle of the Civil War.

**Contact:** John Verrill  
**Location:** Manassas Museum System  
**Date:** November 2008

**Spring, 2009: Commission Meeting**

**Focus:** This will be a working session in Richmond.

**Contact:** Cheryl Jackson  
**Location:** GAB, Speaker's Conference Room  
**Date:** TBA

**June 25, 2009: The Civil War in Harpers Ferry**

**Focus:** This event will represent the beginning of the national sesquicentennial commemoration, and is being planned in cooperation with the State of West Virginia and the National Park Service. The June 25, 2009 kick-off is expected to include a commission meeting involving Virginia and West Virginia officials, a panel presentation, a reception and dinner, and a guided tour of the Lower Town, the armory and the archeological site.

**Contact:** Dennis Frye  
**Location:** Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, West Virginia  
**Date:** June 25, 2009

**Fall 2009 – The Civil War in Culpeper**

**Focus:** This meeting might be coordinated with the commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of the Town of Culpeper in 1759. The tour might include historic sites in Culpeper County, such as the battlefield at Brandy Station (June 9, 1863), and other selected historic sites emphasizing life in the Piedmont of Virginia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, consistent with the cultural theme for 2009 (“Life in Virginia’s Cities, Towns and Counties”).

**Chairman:**  
**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour> **Culpeper**  
**Date:**

**Spring, 2010: Commission Meeting**

**Focus:** This could be a working session, with a speaker on the military history theme for 2010, the Union response to growing sectional tensions in 1860.

**Contact:** Cheryl Jackson  
**Location:** TBA  
**Date:** TBA

### **Fall 2010: The African-American Soldier**

**Focus:** This meeting could include a presentation on the role of African Americans in the war efforts on both the Confederate and Union sides, including the United States Colored Troops. This might be a good opportunity to visit the New Market Heights battlefield in Eastern Henrico County.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet>

**Date:**

### **February 2011: Exhibit Opening at the Virginia Historical Society**

**Focus:** A reception could be planned in conjunction with the opening of the commission-sponsored exhibit, “*Virginia’s Civil War: America’s Great Turning Point.*” This exhibit will be on display at the VHS during 2011 and then travel to selected museums in Norfolk, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Abingdon, Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Winchester.

**Contact:** Paul A. Levensood, President-elect and CEO-elect, VHS

**Location:** Virginia Historical Society

**Date:** February 2011

### **Spring 2011: The Road to Secession**

**Focus:** This meeting could focus on the capital of Virginia from the different perspectives of Unionists, Confederates, and African-Americans, during the period of the secession convention and the events during the winter and spring of 1861 leading up to Virginia’s secession from the Union. This might include a presentation by Nelson Lankford of the Virginia Historical Society, based on his book on this subject.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour> **Virginia State Capitol**

**Date:**

### **Summer 2011: First Manassas: “There Stands Jackson Like A Stone Wall”**

**Focus:** This extended meeting could be designed to commemorate the first major battle of the Civil War, the Battle of First Manassas, July 21, 1861. A panel presentation, battlefield tour, reception and dinner could be planned, along with significant media coverage.

**Contact:** Dr. Jack Censer/Supt. Ed Clark (Joint venture)

**Location:** George Mason University/Manassas National Battlefield Park

**Date:** July 2011

### **Fall 2011 – The Civil War in Hampton Roads**

**Focus:** This meeting could provide an overview of the war in Hampton Roads in 1861-62, focusing on the Cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton and Newport News, and emphasizing the naval aspects of the war. The commission could tour the Mariners Museum and the Monitor Center.

**Contact:** Dr. Phillip Hamilton, Christopher Newport University

**Location:** Mariners Museum, Monitor Center

**Date:**

### **Spring 2012: Jackson's Valley Campaign**

**Focus:** This meeting could focus on the 1862 Valley Campaign (March-June 1862), possibly visiting the battlefields at Cross Keys and Port Republic, and other historic sites, in partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission. The meeting could include a site visit to Cross Keys and Port Republic.

**Contact:** Dr. Stephen L. Longenecker

**Location:** Bridgewater College

**Date:**

### **June 2012: The Seven Days**

**Focus:** Based in Richmond, this meeting could emphasize the emergence of Robert E. Lee as the leader of the Army of Northern Virginia, with a tour highlighting the Seven Days Battles: (June 25-July 1, 1862).

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet> **Richmond**

**Date:**

### **Fall 2012: The Emancipation Proclamation**

**Focus:** This meeting could include a presentation on the historical background and implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation following the Battle of Antietam in September, 1862. The proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet> **Virginia Union University**

**Date:**

### **Spring 2013: Chancellorsville: Lee's Greatest Victory**

**Focus:** Based in Fredericksburg, this meeting could include a tour of the Battle of Chancellorsville, April 27-May 6, 1863.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet>**Fredericksburg\***

**Date:** \*Note: The MOC has offered to host one of these meetings at its Spotsylvania location, if open in time with space sufficient\*

### **Fall 2013: Communication, Letters and News on the Home Front**

**Focus:** This meeting could highlight the resources of "The Valley of the Shadow," the web-based depository of information on the Civil War era in two communities, Staunton, Virginia, and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. This would be consistent with the commission's cultural theme for 2013.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet>**Staunton**

**Date:**

### **Spring 2014 – The Overland Campaign**

**Focus:** This meeting could highlight the Overland Campaign in May and June, 1864, the Battles of the Wilderness (May 5-7), Spotsylvania Courthouse (May 8-21), the North Anna River (May 23-26) and Cold Harbor (June 3). The presentations could also address the burden of the war on the soldiers in the field, consistent with the commission's military history theme for 2014.

**Contact:**

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet>**Fredericksburg\***

**Date:** \*Note: The MOC has offered to host one of these meetings at its Spotsylvania location, if open in time with space sufficient\*

### **Fall 2014 – The Siege of Petersburg**

**Focus:** In cooperation with Pamplin Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier, this meeting could provide an overview of the ten-month long siege of Petersburg between June 1864 and April 1865, including site visits to the Crater (July 30, 1864), the final breakthrough (April 2, 1865), and other sites in the Petersburg area. The tour could also focus on the strain of war on communities, families and prisoners of war, consistent with the commission's cultural theme for 2014.

**Contact:** Suggestion: Wilson Greene, Chris Calkins

**Location:** <No proposals received for this Meeting/Tour yet>**Virginia State University**

**Date:**

**April 2015 – Lee’s Retreat to Appomattox**

**Focus:** This meeting could 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 special culmination event (“Where the Nation Reunited”) on or around April 9, 2015.

**Contact:** Anne Dixon/Dr. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, Sweet Briar College (Joint venture)

**Location:** **Appomattox**

**Date:** April 9, 2015

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