

**VIRGINIA SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR COMMISSION**

**Report of the Commission**

Speaker of the House of Delegates William J. Howell, Chairman

December 14, 2010

9:00 a.m.

Commission members present: Speaker William J. Howell, Senator Charles J. Colgan, Sr., Senator R. Creigh Deeds, Delegate Algie T. Howell, Jr., Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter, Senator Mamie E. Locke, and Dr. Paul A. Levensgood.

**I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks**

*The Honorable William J. Howell, Chairman*

Speaker Howell called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance. He highlighted the Commission's hard work since its inception in 2006 and its recognition of the outstanding opportunities presented by the 150th anniversary of the Civil War for the Commonwealth.

**II. Update on Commission Programs in Development**

**(i) Civil War 150 HistoryMobile**

**Special Announcement**

*Chuck Wilson, President, Wilson Trucking Corporation*

*Russ Tedder, Senior Vice President for Volvo and Mack Trucks*

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Tedder announced the very generous donation of a Volvo tractor for operation of the *HistoryMobile*. Mr. Tedder commented that Volvo would provide the use of any model tractor that the *HistoryMobile* requires at a low cost lease rate of \$1.00 and will allow the Commission full use of the tractor for the duration of the sesquicentennial commemoration period. The tractor, manufactured at the New River Valley Plant in Dublin, Virginia - - the world's largest Volvo manufacturing plant - - will be environmentally friendly and the safest on the market.

The Commission applauded the announcement and extended its deepest appreciation for Volvo's generous partnership. He also thanked members of a Core Leadership Team working with the Civil War 150 Foundation forge partnerships to support the *HistoryMobile*, including Chuck Wilson (Wilson Trucking Corporation), John Cox (Cox Transportation Services), Dale Bennett (Virginia Trucking Association), and Rick Holcomb (Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles).

**Update on Design-Build; Staffing and Tour Management; Budget Review**

*Cheryl Jackson, Executive Director*

*Ashley Hall, Senior Policy Analyst, Department of Motor Vehicles*

*Roy Knox, Vice President of Administration and Finance, Virginia Tourism Corporation*

Ms. Jackson reported that the design-build process for the *HistoryMobile* is moving forward smoothly. John Hennessey, Chief Historian with the Fredericksburg/ Spotsylvania National Military Park, is voluntarily serving as the lead planner for the *HistoryMobile*, working with the design/build company (ExPlus and Riggs-Ward) and staff of the Virginia Historical Society. The

*HistoryMobile* will present an interactive and immersive experience. The exhibit we will reinforce the geographic dispersal of war in Virginia, wherever possible giving visitors the opportunity to explore and interact with stories from their own region. The main components of the storyline for the *HistoryMobile* will include:

#### *Why War?*

Introducing the themes of the exhibit—soldier, civilian, slave—and provoking the question, "Why War?" It will be shown outside the *HistoryMobile*, which frees up considerable space inside.

#### *Battlefront*

This is intended to be a powerful immersion experience that will convey the human experience of battle in its intensity and tragedy.

#### *Homefront*

Embedded into a home-like environment will be both digital and manual interactive screens, asking visitors: "What Would You Do?" A series of real-life dilemmas that faced Virginia's civilians will be presented, allowing visitors to make choices based on the information available at the time.

#### *Slavery*

A reproduction of quarters used by slaves will be part of the Homefront experience, portraying the broad experience of slavery amidst war across the Commonwealth—those who stayed, those who fled, those who were impressed to serve, etc. Again, visitors will be faced with choices—an extension of the "What Would You Do?" program introduced in the Homefront space.

#### *Loss-Gain-Legacy*

This segment will feature faces and stories of Virginians and those who came here to create a powerful environment within which to explore the profound impact of the war on Virginia, the end of slavery and reunification of the nation, and the enduring (and controversial) legacy of the war.

All of the above components of the *HistoryMobile* will work together to introduce visitors to the wealth of Civil War sites in Virginia and encourage visitation to the sites. The exterior of the *HistoryMobile* will be equipped with a retractable awning and stand-alone tents under which interactive touch screens will be located allowing visitors to determine how to visit key destinations throughout Virginia. Local historical societies, tourism bureaus, and museums will be able to feature information in the tents as well. To further illustrate the intended layout and footprint of the *HistoryMobile*, Ms. Jackson distributed a schematic drawing submitted by the design-build team of Riggs Ward and ExPlus, which is in the process of securing a trailer to begin building the exhibit.

Delegate Lingamfelter noted his preference for a double-expandable trailer for the *HistoryMobile* believing it would be beneficial to have the extra space. Ms. Jackson explained her understanding that the difference in cost between a single and a double expandable is prohibitive. However, the

design as mentioned above, which utilizes the exterior of the *HistoryMobile* for the introductory film, maximizes all available exhibit space.

Ms. Jackson reviewed the partnership the Commission has formed with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) to provide staffing and tour management of the *HistoryMobile* while it travels throughout the Commonwealth. Roy Knox, Vice President of Administration and Finance with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, reported that VTC has hired Ralph Earnhardt as Tour Manager, who is currently developing an Operations Manual and tentative schedule.

Mr. Knox also pointed out the four-page editorial on sesquicentennial related events in Virginia that appears in the 2011 Virginia Tourism Guide. The cover of the guide features the American Civil War Center at Tredegar reinforcing that site as the "Gateway to Civil War History" in Virginia. However, Dr. Levenson expressed concern that the Commission-sponsored exhibition, *An American Turning Point*, opening February 4, 2011 at the Virginia Historical Society, is not mentioned in the Travel Guide, nor are any other of the Commission's programs. Mr. Knox assured Commission members that the exhibition will be included in future Travel Guides. Delegate Lingamfelter added that the Commission needs to work with VTC to ensure that a unified and strategic marketing message is in place.

Ashley Hall, Senior Policy Analyst with the Department of Motor Vehicles, reiterated to Commission members that DMV will continue to work with VTC and will be responsible for routing, permitting, and travel logistics of the *HistoryMobile* and the Volvo tractor. Ms. Hall indicated that DMV has interviewed and identified a well-qualified candidate for the Logistics Coordinator position. Additionally, DMV has office space for the new employee whose first task will be to draft an advance packet to send to localities detailing site requirements for a *HistoryMobile* visit. Other tasks for the Logistics Coordinator will be setting up travel routes and scheduling preventive maintenance for the tractor-trailer.

**(ii) 2011 Signature Conference: "*Military Strategy in the American Civil War*"**

Ms. Jackson reported that the 2010 Signature Conference at Norfolk State University was a phenomenal success and that the DVD from the conference was due in her office later that day. CSPAN aired the conference, and positive feedback continues to pour in. The Commission's first annual Award of Excellence was bestowed at the conference to John Hennessy for his leadership of the *HistoryMobile* project.

Planning for the 2011 Signature Conference at Virginia Tech to be chaired by Commission member Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. is coming along well. Ms. Jackson took the opportunity to remind Commission members of the Signature Conference topics for each year that when considered as a whole illustrate a more complete story of Virginia in the Civil War. Signature Conference topics are as follows:

2009: *America on the Eve of the Civil War*

Conference Chair: Dr. Edward L. Ayers

Location: University of Richmond

Date: April 29, 2009

Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2009conference.php>

2010: *Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History*

Conference Chair: Dr. James O. Horton

Location: Norfolk State University  
Date: September 24, 2010  
Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2010conference.php>

2011: *Military Strategy in the American Civil War*  
Conference Chair: Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.  
Location: Virginia Tech  
Date: May 21, 2011  
Conference website: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2011conference.php>

2012: *Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War*  
Conference Chair: Lt. Gen. John Knapp  
Location: Virginia Military Institute  
Date: March 22, 2012

2013: *The Home Front in the Civil War*  
Conference Co-Chairs: Dr. Scott R. Nelson and Dr. Carol Sheriff  
Location: College of William and Mary  
Date: TBD

2014: *Civil War in a Global Context*  
Conference Chair: Dr. Peter N. Stearns  
Location: George Mason University  
Date: TBD

2015: *Memory of the Civil War*  
Conference Chair: Dr. Gary Gallagher  
Location: University of Virginia  
Date: TBD

Ms. Jackson also noted that the publication from the 2009 Signature Conference, *America on the Eve of the Civil War*, has been published and is available for purchase through UVA Press. All of the Commission's publications and DVDs are for purchase through the website: [www.VirginiaCivilWar.org](http://www.VirginiaCivilWar.org). Sales of the conference DVDs are going well and provide an additional nongeneral fund revenue source for the Commission.

**(iii) Federal Enhancement Grant Project: Sesquicentennial and Scenic Byways Promotion**  
*Mike Estes, Director, Local Assistance Division, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)*

Mr. Estes updated the Commission on the status of the Federal Enhancement Grant Project, reminding members that this money cannot be used to improve roadways and is strictly intended for non-transportation infrastructure. The Commonwealth Transportation Board was given \$3,000,000 in grant money for these types of initiatives and in June of this year they approved funding for the following projects:

- (1) Purchase of Civil War battlefield land by the Civil War Preservation Trust;
- (2) Update statewide map and create additional markers for the Civil War Trails program;

- (3) Creation of smart-phone tours of various battlefields by the Civil War Preservation Trust; and
- (4) Multimedia travel solution for Welcome Centers in Virginia that will provide an interactive electronic platform for visitors to view information about Civil War sites and other historic and scenic places in Virginia.

A Request for Proposals was issued for the multimedia travel solution in August with forty companies attending the pre-proposal conference. The project team plans to have a contractor on board in January and hopes to have the first round of the solution ready for summer 2011.

**(iv) VHS Exhibit: *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia***  
*Andrew Talkov, Exhibit Coordinator, Virginia Historical Society*

Mr. Talkov reported that the museum exhibition is moving forward on schedule, on budget, and will open on February 4, 2011. The exhibition will run at the Virginia Historical Society throughout 2011 and then will travel to seven other museums in Virginia. Most Virginians should be able to travel to see the exhibition some time during the commemoration period in under an hour. The exhibition is thematically organized and can be broken into two major parts: "Waging War" and "Surviving War." In addition to interactives and high-tech components, the exhibition will also highlight over two hundred artifacts. Major themes of the exhibition include:

*Journey to Freedom:* Visitors can simulate choices made by enslaved African Americans in seeking freedom by going to Union lines.

*Civil Liberties & the Civil War:* Visitors will overhear a typical conversation from the time period of people speaking ill of the government and will be asked to vote on whether or not they would turn in their neighbor if confronted with a similar situation. Votes will be tallied for all 4 years.

*The Deadliest Enemy:* Visitors will see a silhouette of a real-time amputation illustrating the suffering of soldiers on the battlefield.

*Sick Call:* Visitors will take on the role of a Civil War surgeon and try to diagnose patients' conditions.

In addition, there will also be a battlefield simulation created in partnership with the Kernstown Battlefield Association which will incorporate soundscape, visual imagery and objects that support the idea of the horror and impact of battle, including a reproduction of a skull that was retrieved at the Wilderness battlefield.

One of the Virginia Historical Society's most important Civil War holdings - Private Robert Knox Sneed's drawings and writings - will also be featured during the exhibition. Visitors will be able to select a month and day during the Civil War to see Private Sneed's drawing and diary entry for that particular date.

Two copies of a panel exhibition are also being created for travel throughout the state to venues lacking the space to host the larger museum exhibition. The panel exhibition will consist of introductory panel, text panels and large graphic concluding panel. Smartphone technology will

also provide additional content that enhances the panel exhibit. The panel exhibit will debut in the General Assembly Building in February.

**(v) Civil War 150 Legacy Project: Document Digitization and Access**

*Renee Savits, CW 150 Legacy Project, Library of Virginia*

Ms. Savits updated Commission members on the status of the *Civil War 150 Legacy Project*, which has been extremely well received. Library staff is working through the Commission's extensive network of local sesquicentennial committees to publicize scanning events and provide the space and volunteers at no cost to the Commission. Thus far, there have been fourteen scanning events yielding 3,000 images with forty-four events scheduled over the next seven months. Ms. Savits estimates that if each locality schedules two events and the average yield of 300 images holds, the Commission will reap some 76,000 images of diaries, letters, and other Civil War memorabilia. Staff has scanned some very interesting items including the Keiffer family papers which consist of letters written by John Keiffer, a Union soldier's father from Pennsylvania, to another son and daughter-in-law in Virginia. John Keiffer, an extremely vigilant parent, followed his soldier son's unit during the Civil War writing to his other son with updates. Staff has also scanned a letter dated January 1, 1861 from a man in Texas writing to a relative in southwest Virginia stating there was "considerable excitement" in Texas regarding secession and he wanted to know what Virginia was doing. Another interesting find came in Prince George County with the scanning of the Cole Family papers. The letters are from the Cole Family to the federal government requesting compensation for property damaged during the Civil War. Interestingly, it was a former slave of the Cole family who itemized the property damage for the family in one of the letters.

The Legacy Project has received a great deal of media interest. The *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* have featured the project in their newspapers. Delegate Lingamfelter praised the long-lasting impact the treasure trove of items being uncovered through this effort will have on generations to come. He also suggested that Library staff reach out to folks in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia and the eastern portion of Tennessee when they are in those areas.

**III. Staff Update**

*Cheryl Jackson, Executive Director*

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Event - Manassas National Battlefield Park**

Ms. Jackson reported that plans for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Event to be held on July 21, 2011, in Manassas are well underway. Governor McDonnell is scheduled to attend the event and has invited President Obama, and Dr. Edward L. Ayers, President of the University of Richmond, will deliver remarks. The *Civil War 150 HistoryMobile* will make its debut as well.

Ms. Jackson drew attention to a document in Commission members' meeting packets outlining two dates for members' calendars. There will be a legislative reception and gallery tour on Wednesday, February 9, 2011 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. of the Commission-sponsored exhibition, *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia*. On Saturday, April 23, 2011 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., a lecture on Robert E. Lee's decision to resign from the US Army to accept command of the Virginia forces in April 1861 will be held at the State Capitol in the Old House Chamber. Sponsored by the Museum of the Confederacy, this lecture will be given by Dr. Gary Gallagher, noted historian from the University of Virginia.

**Ongoing Activities: Conference publications, Local committees, Sesquicentennial Tourism Marketing Grant program, Logo requests, DVDs**

Ms. Jackson reviewed a map of Virginia indicating that all but a handful of localities have established local sesquicentennial committees. This network is critical to the success of the work of the Commission as evidenced by initiatives such as The Legacy Project.

Ms. Jackson also reported on the status of the Commission's Tourism Marketing Grant program administered by the Virginia Tourism Corporation. To date, the Commission has held three rounds of grants with the fourth round closing December 15, 2010. Thus far, the Commission has awarded \$55,000 in grant money that has been matched by \$120,000 for various sesquicentennial projects. The grant program has proven to be very successful in providing a small amount of seed money to localities to prepare for the sesquicentennial commemoration.

The Commission received 51 logo usage requests in 2010, all of which were expedited in accordance with the procedure established by the Executive Committee. The Commission works with Office of the Attorney General on allegations of trademark or copyright infringement.

***Walk in Their Footsteps* Demonstration**

Ms. Jackson announced that the *Walk in Their Footsteps* database, originally conceived by Delegate Lingamfelter, is in the final stages of development and will be ready to go live on the Commission's website in January 2011. The purpose of the database is to allow people to see places that their ancestor's regiment served in Virginia during the Civil War, and then to easily plan visits to those sites. Visitors will be able to print out a "Battle Plan" of Civil War sites in Virginia that they wish to visit in person, literally walking in their ancestor's footsteps. Ms. Jackson demonstrated the database highlighting search features available to visitors. Ms. Jackson also noted that Expedia has provided a link for the Commission's website creating a revenue sharing program should visitors book their travel to Virginia using this link. The Commission praised the work of staff and developers in creating the program and hailed it as an excellent resource for travel throughout Virginia for the sesquicentennial.

**V. Other Business**

Delegate Lingamfelter reported on a recent meeting he convened of leaders in Fauquier County to brainstorm ways to maximize the opportunities presented by the sesquicentennial commemoration. Ms. Jackson attended the meeting and made remarks about the Commission's goals and projects in development. Delegate Lingamfelter asked that staff prepare information for distribution to legislators to enhance participation in their districts.

Beblon Parks with the Virginia Education Association (VEA) commented that her organization would like to connect their sesquicentennial committee with Commission staff to explore ways in which the VEA can get involved. Delegate Lingamfelter commented that the Commission had discussed at one time developing teacher staff rides of Civil War sites in Virginia and asked staff to provide a report outline the costs of such a program at a future meeting.

**VI. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Members and guests were invited to the Library of Virginia for lunch and special preview of the upcoming exhibit, "Union or

Secession: Virginians Decide," including an exclusive viewing of the original Ordinance of Secession.