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The Warren Sentinel

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Civil War Sesquicentennial

▼ Front Royal to commemorate event

By **BROOKE FRICK**
The Warren Sentinel

WARREN COUNTY — John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in October of 1859 may not have been the official beginning of the Civil War, but for the Commonwealth of Virginia it marks the beginning of the sesquicentennial commemoration of the war.

"We're recalling it back to the spark that ignited the conflict," said Patrick Farris, executive director for the Warren Heritage Society.

Most historians agree there was no other single event more significant than the Harpers Ferry raid when it comes to

why the Civil War started, said Farris. In fact, Suzanne Silek of the Warren Rifles Confederate Memorial Museum, said local militias that were already organized expedited their training as a result of Brown's raid. These militias, known as Warren Blues and the Warren Rifles, would eventually go on to make up part of the Confederate Army.

"It's [the Harpers Ferry raid] impact here was rather dramatic and immediate because of the proximity," added Farris.

Thus 2009 — 150 years after Brown's famous raid — has been designated as the beginning of Virginia's six-year com-

memoration of the Civil War by the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission.

Farris and Silek share the chairmanship of the Warren County Local Committee responsible for creating and scheduling events from January 2009 through December 2015 to commemorate Virginia's involvement in the Civil War.

"We are remembering everything that happened during that very dramatic event [the Civil War]," said Farris.

One event planned to commemorate the year of 1859 will

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be a lecture by Jonathan Noyales of Lord Fairfax Community College. He will present his original research concerning the local reaction to the raid on Harpers Ferry, which at that point in time was in the state of Virginia. His lecture will also appear in the Warren Heritage Society Journal.

The Committee is also planning a Civil War Trails sign cleaning event, which will enlist the help of Skyline and Warren County high school students to clean the signs relating to the Battle of Front Royal. In addition, the committee will create a calendar outlining the events of 1859, how

they relate to the impending conflict of the Civil War and how the local population perceived those events.

While Farris said the committee is excited about the upcoming activities, he also compared the six-year long commemoration to a marathon, adding, "We've got to pace ourselves."

Look for more information regarding the specifics of events planned for the 2009 commemoration in an insert that will appear in The Warren Sentinel in April. You can also visit <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org> for information regarding Virginia's commemoration of the Civil War.