

Prince William County preps for Civil War anniversary

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Prince William, Manassas and Manassas Park volunteers have forged ahead with a 2006 request from the General Assembly for statewide participation in the Civil War Sesquicentennial, or 150th anniversary, and come up with a gameplan that includes a dozen activities.

“Prince William was such a focal point for the first two years of the way,” said Brendon Hanafin, with Historic Properties within the county’s Department of Public Works. “We really want to bring that out.”

What will take place from 2011 to 2015 are several events to highlight the area’s participation in the war. One major theme: “Prince William Prepares for War,” according to a background summary from the recently assembled Prince William Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Committee. Other themes include the Battle of First Manassas, the Potomac Blockade, the Battle of Second Manassas, the Battle of Kettle Run and the Battle of Bristoe Station.

“We have been doing a lot of activities and have been planning a lot of activities,” Hanafin said. “Education of the public is a huge part of our goals. In April, 2011, we will bring the entire sixth grade in the county to Manassas battlefield” for a commemorative event.

The push to commemorate began in 2006 when the General Assembly created the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission “for the purpose of planning for and commemorating the 150th anniversary of Virginia’s participation” in the war, according to the background summary. In 2007, a handful of state delegates requested localities to create separate committees tasked with the same. Shortly after, the county’s sesquicentennial committee was born with the goal of presenting the area’s war-related history as “a fair and balanced story,” according to the background documents.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau has played a key role in coordinating Civil War commemorations with Journey Through Hallowed Ground efforts. The JTHG is a federally declared National Heritage Area of “unparalleled history,” according to the background documents, that traverses roads and lands from Gettysburg, Pa., to Monticello in Albemarle County, and highlights points of interest like Brentsville Courthouse or Harper’s Ferry National Historical Park in West Virginia.

“Prince William County lies at the center of the corridor, and is an important component in this effort,” state the background documents. “The Prince William County Convention

and Visitor's Bureau works directly with the [JTHG] Partnership on marketing and tourism related projects.”

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