

The Civil War Sesquicentennial

A Plan for the Fredericksburg-Stafford-Spotsylvania Region

Overview: The approaching Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War offers this region an opportunity to explore the roots and nature of this momentous event, and to do it using the sites where some of the war's most notable events took place. For the Fredericksburg-Stafford-Spotsylvania region, the Civil War was a transformative event—one that bisects the area's history, one that left a physical imprint on the community that took decades to heal, and one whose social and political relevance are still debated and discussed. The war served as a point of departure for the ongoing quest for legal and social equality for all Americans, the still-vigorous debate over the appropriate reach of the federal government, and the never-ending effort to reconcile differing cultural values held under a single national flag.

Why here? The Fredericksburg-Stafford-Spotsylvania region is uniquely qualified to commemorate and interpret the huge range of human experiences that comprised America's most trying epoch. More than any other area, Fredericksburg, Stafford, and Spotsylvania reflect the ebb and flow of a nation at war with itself. Facing the possibility of war, the community carefully considered and debated its course, reflecting the political, economic, and social uncertainty of a nation in evolution. Once war came, both men and women offered their services to a fledgling nation (and a few quietly worked for the Union). The arrival of the Union army here in 1862 provoked a social upheaval, as more than 10,000 slaves fled bondage to cross the Rappahannock to freedom—marking the end of a labor and social system that had existed here for more than 140 years. Armies encamped here for months on end, transforming the landscape, imposing an economic woe that would require decades to erase. And, in a rolling climax of human suffering, four great battles raged here—battles that reflect the evolving nature of the conflict and materially affected the outcome of the war.

Purpose of the Sesquicentennial Observance: The Fredericksburg-Stafford-Spotsylvania region's sesquicentennial observance will engage the entire community to help convey the region's wartime experience to the nation at large. Programming, events, and media, while certainly treating the battles as climactic cornerstone events, will go beyond the battlefields to portray the human experience of the community at large. Sesquicentennial events and programming will track the experience of the community from the onset of secession in 1860 to and into Reconstruction. It will not portray the war monolithically, and instead will reveal that the same events were sometimes seen very differently depending on one's gender, economic status, race, or uniform color. For some, war was pure suffering. For others, war brought freedom. In those varied experiences are myriad opportunities for engaging new visitors in new ways.

The Sesquicentennial of the Civil War
Fredericksburg-Stafford-Spotsylvania Sesquicentennial
Committee

Schedule of Events and Programs

Note: The schedule is largely based on several thematically based recurring programs that will be presented in different form at different points in the observance: History Alive (drama and storytelling, Years of Anguish (lectures), Descendants Remember (programming geared specifically to descendants groups), Songs from the Storm (Field, Home, and Slaves), Film Festival, Churches Remember, and Voices from the Storm. Noted next to each major event is the group or individual responsible for coordinating that weekend's activities, though it is understood that each cluster of events will require the efforts of many to be successful.

2010

May- December 2010: "Footfalls of the Famous"—an exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum

November 20: The Secession Crisis

- History Alive: The Election of 1860 and Secession: Virginians Debate (Dramatic Presentations)
- "Years of Anguish" I: The Coming Storm: Causes and Secession. National and local focus. Sponsored by the Fredericksburg Area Museum, the NPS, UMW. Location: Fredericksburg Baptist Church. Speakers: William Freeling, Charles Dew

2011

March – June: "Letters and Diaries of the Civil War"—an exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum.

May: "Years of Anguish" II: Virginia Goes to War.

May 22-23: Battle Re-enactment (TBD) (**Spotsylvania County**)

June: At the Abyss: Virginia Goes to War (Chatham) **Milestone Event: NPS**

- Slavery and slave places in antebellum Stafford and Fredericksburg

- “Songs from the Field” (musical program)
- Mustering (living history demonstration at Chatham)
 - o “People’s Re-enactment”—mustering
 - o Children’s muster
- “History Alive”: Dramatic presentations relating to area soldiers going to war and area civilians interacting with Confederate soldiers, 1861-1862.
- “Songs from Home” (musical program)

October: Film Festival #1

December: “Holiday without Joy: Christmas in the Civil War” (Chatham, with associated programs at library or other sites, including music and Kevin Rawlings as Civil War Santa)

2012

March 2012-May 2013. “We can never go back”—an exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum

May 5-6: The Crossing A Milestone Event

- Canoe-based tours of Fredericksburg waterfront (requires partner and admission)
- Tours, talks, and special programs (dramatic presentation of the crossing?)
- Children’s programs
- Descendants Remember: Slaves descendants
- Slavery and Slave Places in Spotsylvania (NPS and Spotsylvania)
- Songs of Freedom: Fisk Jubilee Singers or Songs from the Field
- Voices from the Storm: To Freedom: The World and Words of John Washington
- Years of Anguish III: Slaves and Freedom.

May: Battle Re-enactment (TBD) (**Spotsylvania County**)

May 19: Footfalls of the Famous: Tracking famous visitors to Stafford and Fredericksburg

- Mr. Lincoln’s Fredericksburg (or, if you prefer, Mr. Davis’s Fredericksburg), a Tour **NPS**

June-December: “Lost Photographs of the Civil War”—an exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum.

June-August: History at Sunset focused entirely on 1862, military and civilian **NPS**

June 1-3: Milestone Event: “Under the Yoke: The Union Occupation” A Major Event--**NPS**

- “History Alive” II: Dramatic presentations and storytelling of life under Union occupation

- Songs from Home II: Musical program
- Descendants Remember: Recognizing Descendants of Area Civilians
- Lizzie Alsop Diary is published
- Whose Independence? Fourth of July 1862 (Chatham)
- "People's Re-enactment" of 1862. 4th of July observance in the Union army
- Drilling and demonstrations
- Voices from the Storm: Civilians vs Yankees

September: "Yankees in Falmouth!" Living History Event

September: "The Churches Remember" #1: City of Fredericksburg

October: Film Festival #2

December 1: Voices from the Storm: Battle of Fredericksburg **NPS**

December 10-11: **Milestone Event.** Battle of Fredericksburg

- Re-enactment (local group)
- In the Crosshairs: Fredericksburg and the Growing Destruction of War (talk)
- History Alive III: Cast to the Countryside: Refugees Flee Battle (a participatory event at Salem Church, Maassaponax Church, or both)
- Illumination of Fredericksburg—City Dock to Sunken Road
- Irish Brigade: Ordeal and Legacy
- Descendants Remember: The Soldiers (focused on the descendants of soldiers who fought at Fredericksburg)
- "Years of Anguish" IV: The Battle of Fredericksburg **NPS**

2013

March: "Years of Anguish V": Presidents and their Generals.

April: **Milestone Event.** Union Army Encampment and Lincoln Grand Review – Living History Event

- Winter encampment "People's re-enactment"
- Songs from the Camps (Chatham)

May: The Battle of Chancellorsville Re-enactment (**Spotsylvania County**)

May 3-5: **Milestone Event.** The Battle of Chancellorsville **NPS**

- Descendants Remember: Chancellorsville
- History Alive IV: Participatory Event: Jackson's Flank March
- Special tours and programs

- Voices from the Storm: Chancellorsville

September: The Churches Remember #2: Stafford

- Church-based events
- Voices from the Storm: Churches Swept by War

June-August: All NPS History at Sunset focused on 1863, soldier and civilian **NPS**

September: "The Churches Remember" #2: Stafford County

October: Film Festival #3

October: Preserving History at Home

2014

May: The Battle of Wilderness/Spotsylvania re-enactment (**Spotsylvania County**)

May 9-11: **Milestone Event.** Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania **NPS**

- Descendants Remember: Wilderness and Spotsylvania
- "Years of Anguish" VI Virginia Desolate: War Consumes the Old Dominion in 1864 **NPS**
- History Alive V: Heavy Hearts, Vacant Hearths: Stories of Local Families Transformed by War
- Voices from the Storm: City of Hospitals
- City of Hospitals tours
- Illumination of Spotsylvania
- Songs from Home, Songs from Camp

June-August: NPS History at Sunset focused on 1864 **NPS**

September: "The Churches Remember" #3: Spotsylvania County **Work Group**

October: Film Festival #4 **Work Group**

November: "Years of Anguish" VII: Bullets and Ballots.

2015

April: War's End

Voices from the Storm: "We have lost all..." **NPS**

Years of Anguish IX: Reconstructing a Community **NPS**

June: **Milestone Event.** “Legacies.”

- Descendants Remember: Slavery to Freedom (African-American Committee)
- “Years of Anguish” VIII: Remembering the Civil War **NPS**
- Remembering: The Creation of the National Cemetery and Confederate Cemeteries **NPS**
- Tours, talks
- Preserving History at Home #2
- “History Alive” V: Passages to Freedom
- Juneteenth
- Reckoning: A Community Forum on the Legacy of the Civil War
- Songs of Freedom: Church Choirs on the Lawn at Chatham

July-December: “After the Glory”—an exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum.