Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

Civil War and Emancipation 150 Commemoration in Virginia

Cheryl Jackson and Rusty Nix
NCSL Professional Development Seminar
RACSS and LSSS
October 2014
Established by the General Assembly in 2006 (HB 1440)

Plan for and commemorate the 150th anniversary of Virginia’s participation in the Civil War

Speaker William J. Howell, Chairman
Sen. Charles J. Colgan, Sr., Vice Chairman

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Commission Members

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Sen. Bryce E. Reeves
Sen. Walter A. Stosch
John P. Ackerly, III
Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.
Dr. Paul A. Levengood
Guiding Principles

Key Opportunities: Education, Preservation, Tourism

Virginia is national model
Multiple perspectives – inclusiveness
Battlefront, Home front, Slavery and freedom
Statewide commemoration
Permanent lasting legacy

Increased visitation

Partnerships are key to success

“Virginia’s sesquicentennial is changing the conversation and drawing a record number of visitors” – Richmond Times-Dispatch
Civil War travelers are valued

1. Stay 50% longer
2. Spend 24% more money

Yearly, these visitors to battlefields generate:

1. More than $15.2 million in state taxes
2. Over $7.8 million in local government income
Civil War 150 Nationwide

No national commission or coordination

Few states have funding or official organization

Grassroots efforts and National Park Service programs

Virginia leads the way – why and how?
First Manassas Reenactment
1961
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1961
U.S. Centennial Commission: *Troubled Commemoration*

- “Saving the Centennial”
- Historians at the helm: Robertson and Nevins
- Focus shifted from “mindless frivolity” to education and remembrance
- Commemoration vs. Celebration
Virginia Centennial Commission:
• Created in 1958
• Vision: Inspiration, “Honor Our Heroes”
• Purpose: Strengthen North/South unity

Chief purpose: “To strengthen the unity of the country through mutual understanding that there was dedication and devotion on both sides. Both North and South gave all they had in support of what they believed was right.”
Civil War Centennial

To Mark the Fields of Bravery

"To mark them actions which will restore the adequate marking of all those fields of bravery so they will endure in the understanding and memory of the people of our Commonwealth and those who visit with us."

From the Act creating the Virginia Civil War Commemoration.

The blue and gray Virginia Civil War Centennial emblems, with its simple design of cannon and lettering, is a familiar landmark on Virginia's highways. Several hundred trailblazers bearing this emblem direct traffic to important sites of Civil War interest. The emblem has been attached to a selected group of almost 200 roadside historic markers dealing with the Civil War, and the Highway Department has erected an advance warning sign 500 feet ahead of each of these markers.

Miss Ruth Shaw, of the Commission's staff, with one of the Centennial trailblazers on the left. At right are a typical advance warning sign and a Civil War roadside marker.

Miss Centennial
Statewide Coordination

Support and enhance local programs

134 local committees

“Walk in Their Footsteps” database

Statewide Calendar of Events
Connecting with Civil War 150

Local Civil War 150 programs
Statewide Calendar of Events
www.VirginiaCivilWar.org
Emmy Nomination (2010)

Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance

Executive Producer
James I. Robertson, Jr.
2009: America on the Eve of the Civil War
University of Richmond

2010: Race, Slavery and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History and Memory
Norfolk State University

2011: Military Strategy and the American Civil War
Virginia Tech

2012: Leadership and Generalship in the Civil War
Virginia Military Institute

2013: The American Civil War at Home
College of William and Mary

2014: The American Civil War in a Global Context
George Mason University

2015: Causes Won and Lost: The End of the Civil War
University of Virginia: April 18, 2015
Civil War 150 Legacy Project: Document Digitization and Access

Partnership with the Library of Virginia to identify and locate original manuscript in private collections relating to the Civil War and emancipation

32,000 images ~ 140 events

Materials include:

- Letters
- Photographs
- Discharge papers
- Diaries
- Pension materials
- Hand-drawn maps
- Hand-drawn sketches
- Military passes
- Claims for damages
An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia

- **Surviving War and Waging War**: 3,000 square feet
- Displayed at Virginia Historical Society throughout 2011
- Travels through 2015 to:
  - Museum of the Shenandoah Valley (Winchester)
  - Lynchburg Museum
  - Hampton History Museum
  - History Museum of Western Virginia (Roanoke)
  - William King Regional Arts Center (Abingdon)
  - Museum of the Confederacy: Appomattox
Civil War 150 HistoryMobile
"Times I wish to leave in the goven yard my..."
SLAVERY, WAR AND FREEDOM

The Civil War ended a system of human bondage in Virginia that had existed for 200 years.

“We didn’t see none of it, but the slaves knew what the war was about.”

©2013 Signature Conference, Williamsburg, VA
2011 - Harper’s Ferry, WV
2012 - Sharpsburg, MD
2013 - Gettysburg, PA
2014 - Kennesaw, GA
2014 - Martinsburg, WV
2014 - Morgan Co., WV
2014 - Frederick, MD
2014 - Marietta, GA
The Virginia Civil War History Mobile

and

Pennsylvania 150th Roadshow