



State Council of
Higher Education for Virginia

Executive Director's Report

Daniel J. LaVista
May 12, 2009



Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

The Commission was created in 2006 by the General Assembly to prepare for and commemorate the 150th anniversary of Virginia's participation in the Civil War.

Del. William Howell, Chair

Del. Albert Eisenberg

Del. Algie Howell

Del. Johnny Joannou

Del. Steven Landes

Del. Scott Lingamfelter

Del. Thomas Wright

Sen. Charles Colgan, Vice Chair

Sen. Creigh Deeds

Sen. John Edwards

Sen. Janet Howell

Sen. Mamie Locke

Mr. John Ackerly

Dr. Paul Levengood

Dr. James Robertson



Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

Powers and Duties of the Commission:

- Develop & conduct commemorative activities.
- Encourage interdisciplinary examination.
- Facilitate balanced activities throughout Virginia.
- Encourage civic/historical/educational/economic org's to create activities to expand understanding of the war's significance.
- Provide technical assistance to localities & nonprofit org's.
- Develop programs/facilities to ensure that the commemoration results in a positive legacy & long-term public benefit.
- Encourage the development/conduct of programs designed to involve all citizens in commemorative activities.

The Commission's work is complemented by a distinguished Advisory Council, three work groups, and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.



WHY THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY MUST BE OBSERVED IN VIRGINIA

James Robertson, Commission Member & Virginia Tech Professor:

“It was here in Virginia that the real Civil War began. It was here in Virginia that the real Civil War ended. Manassas was the fire-bell; Appomattox, the death-knoll. By ... April 15, 1865, the proud Old Dominion lay in ruins: so many of its sons dead or crippled, its society shattered, its economy non-existent, its hopes destroyed.

That the Commonwealth rose slowly but proudly from the ashes is its greatest triumph.”



WHY THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY MUST BE OBSERVED IN VIRGINIA

James Robertson, Commission Member & Virginia Tech Professor:

“We must remember, because we cannot forget. And we must remember with a deep sense of reverence. The Sesquicentennial should not be an occasion to re-fight battles, second-guess generals, re-open wounds, or argue anew over principles long resolved Nor is the 150th anniversary of the Civil War an occasion for celebration. Rather, it is the opportunity for commemoration: a solemn reflection of what two generations of Americans bequeathed to us through their suffering.”



Higher Education and the Signature Conferences

Americans on the Eve of the Civil War

University of Richmond

April 29, 2009

- “Meet the Press” format
- Taking stock of the nation: political, economic, moral
- Signature events: John Brown’s Raid on Harper’s Ferry
- Predicting the election of 1860



Annual Sesquicentennial Signature Conference Series

- Spring 2010: *African-Americans & the Civil War*
Hampton University
- Spring 2011: *American Military Strategy & the Civil War*
Virginia Tech
- Spring 2012: *Leadership & Generalship in the Civil War*
Virginia Military Institute
- Spring 2013: *The Home Front in the Civil War*
College of William & Mary
- Spring 2014: *Civil War in a Global Context*
George Mason University
- Spring 2015: *Memory of the Civil War*
University of Virginia



Sesquicentennial Programs in Development

Museum Exhibition: *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia.*

Civil War 150 HistoryMobile: Vehicle-based high-tech interactive exhibit.

Educational DVD: 3-hour film *Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance* will be free to schools, major libraries, & local committees.

The Legacy Project – Document Digitization & Access: Electronic preservation & sharing of privately-held Civil War-era materials.

Signature Conferences & Law School Symposia: Events addressing broad political, military, social, economic, & constitutional topics.

Sesquicentennial Internet Battlefield Tours: Personalized 'Vodcast' tours of significant Virginia battlefields provided by distinguished historians.



Message to Students

No state had more at stake, or suffered more during and immediately following the Civil War, than Virginia.

Virginia's role in the war – and its tremendous impact on Virginia – are evidenced by the incredibly rich and plentiful array of primary-source documents, as well as sites and relics, throughout the Commonwealth. Virginia is a living Civil War classroom.

The Civil War and its outcomes changed the legal, economic, and social dynamics of the country. The war shaped the Virginia and the America we know today.