

Summary of Sesquicentennial Statewide Citizen Input Meetings

At its April, 2007 meeting, the members of the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board decided that it should get the wishes of the people of the state about what they would like to see done for the sesquicentennial commemoration of the Civil War in South Carolina. The board directed that citizen input meetings be planned statewide. Rodger Stroup acting as chair of the group appointed a committee consisting of Jannie Harriot, Mary Morgan, John Tucker, and Allen Roberson to implement this idea.

The committee decided that seven meetings should be held around the state to get citizen input. Locations, times, and dates of the meetings follow: Aiken, September 18, 7 P.M., Aiken County Historical Museum, 433 Newberry Street, Southwest; Charleston, Wednesday, October 3, 7 P.M., Charleston Museum, 360 Meeting Street; Columbia, Tuesday, October 9, 7 P.M., South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 8301 Parklane Road; Beaufort, Tuesday, October 16, 6 P.M., Beaufort County Library, 311 Scott Street; York, Thursday, October 18, 7 P.M. McCelvey Center, 212 East Jefferson Street; Florence, Monday, October 22, 7 P.M., Florence County Library, 509 Dargan Street; and Greenville, Tuesday, October 30, 6 P.M., Greenville County Library, 25 Heritage Green Place.

Dr. Rodger E. Stroup, director of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, facilitated the meetings. Dr. Fritz Hamer, curator of history at the South Carolina State Museum, and Allen Roberson, director of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum, attended most of the meetings as well as other members of the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board. The committee was careful to select facilities where all citizens would be welcomed and would feel at ease.

The meetings drew approximately 250 citizens who enthusiastically shared their thoughts and ideas about how the sesquicentennial of the Civil War should be observed. More than 60 citizens attended the Charleston meeting, making it the best attended one and the smallest meeting in attendance was the Columbia one with seventeen citizens present. Citizens representing all segments of the population attended the meetings. A majority of those present were white men; however, women were present at all of the meetings. African Americans were present at four of the seven meetings. Representatives of institutions of higher learning were present at four of the meetings. Representatives of the Sons Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, as well as Civil War re-enactors, were present at most of the meetings. Also in attendance were representatives of chambers of commerce, patriotic and civic organizations, local historical societies, museums, and tourism commissions.

The participants were asked four questions:

1. [What should be the role of the SC Sesquicentennial Advisory Board?](#)
2. [How should the advisory board be funded?](#)
3. [What kind of events should be planned for the sesquicentennial?](#)
4. [What should be the lasting benefits of the observance?](#)

The role of the advisory board should be that as outlined in the legislation to establish it. The purpose of the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board is to:

- promote a suitable statewide observance of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War;
- cooperate and assist national, state, and local organizations with programs and activities suitable for the sesquicentennial observance;
- assist in ensuring that any observance of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War is inclusive and appropriately recognizes the experiences and points of view of all people affected by the Civil War; and
- Provide assistance for the development of programs, projects, and activities of the Civil War that have lasting education value.

The South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board shall have the following duties:

- plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities appropriate to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War era and encourage the development of programs that ensure the commemoration results in a positive legacy and has long-term benefits;
- encourage interdisciplinary examination of the Civil War;
- facilitate Civil War related activities throughout the State;
- encourage civic, historical, educational, economic, and other organizations across the State to organize and participate in activities to expand the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the Civil War;
- coordinate and facilitate the public distribution of scholarly research, publications, and interpretation of the Civil War; and
- provide technical assistance to local organizations and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

Other thoughts about the role of the Advisory Board that came from the statewide meetings are:

- develop a mission statement;
- establish goals;
- lobby for state funds and use these funds to establish a grants program for local communities;
- request that the legislation creating the South Carolina Civil War Advisory Board add the Director of Penn Center, additional African American representatives, and a representative from the upstate and the Pee Dee;
- employ a consulting firm to study the economic benefits resulting from the observance and use the results to request funds from the General Assembly and private corporations;
- assist local Charleston organizations with the sesquicentennial observance of the signing of the Ordinance of Secession (December 20, 1860) and the firing on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861);
- host a website with events, programs planned for the sesquicentennial throughout the state;
- cooperate with other states planning observance for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War;
- work to make the observance an educational process with positive results;
- serve as a clearing house for events and programming throughout the state; and
- assist local communities in planning their events and giving constructive guidance and appropriate recommendations for sources of needs.

The one key element expressed at all the meetings is that the sesquicentennial of the Civil War affords an excellent chance for an educational opportunity and the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board should have this goal as its primary objective. The opinion reiterated over and over was the importance of accurate interpretation of the history of the period and the people involved based on facts. The observance should include what life was like for all the people from all sections of the state and not just wealthy planters along the coast. The history of the period before the Civil War should be examined for the various causes of the Civil War and the history of Reconstruction after the Civil War should be examined for its effects in shaping the history of the state.

An issue, which drew many comments at each of the meetings, is whether the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board should endorse local events and programming. The general consensus is that the Board should not make endorsements, but rather serve as coordinator, facilitator, and collaborator. The Advisory Board should not get directly involved in running local events, but it could offer guidance as to the appropriateness of an event or program. The Advisory Board should set the right tone for the entire observance and the observance should be fun, educational, and exciting. The Advisory Board should employ the latest technology to reach the widest audience, especially young people. The Board should perform a coordinating role to prevent duplication of events occurring at the same time. Additionally, the Advisory Board should serve as clearing house for programming around the state, and if state money is appropriated, should develop a matching competitive grants program with explicit guidelines and peer review. The Advisory Board should promote education, but it should not establish guidelines for endorsing educational programs as many local groups that currently do educational programs about the Civil War period in schools already have established standards for participating in school activities.

The second question asked at the meetings is how should the sesquicentennial observance be funded?

At all the statewide meetings, there was agreement that the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board should request state funds from the General Assembly to assist local communities around the state with their planning and activities for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. At several of the meetings local participants noted that state funding would be critical in helping small communities with their activities. Funding would also greatly assist them in marketing their programs. It was further suggested that if no funds were available it would be helpful if the South Carolina Sesquicentennial Advisory Board could provide guidance and expertise to small communities with their planning. There was unanimous opinion that there should be a plan of action developed before requesting state funding. An idea often heard was there needs to be a matching state grants programs as a source of help for local communities. Before requesting state funds, the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board should hire a consulting firm or contract with the USC business school or one of the other state's universities, to show how much money could be generated for the state's economy from tourists attending sesquicentennial related programming, events, and places.

At most all of the meetings, participants felt that it was important for the state to assist the various local Charleston organizations with funding for the sesquicentennial of the signing of the Ordinance of Secession and the firing on Fort Sumter. Again, it is believed that these two events will bring not only national attention to South Carolina, but also international attention. These two events are key initial ones for the entire sesquicentennial observance and should be staged in keeping with their significance and importance.

Another source of proposed funding was corporations. This idea was discussed at length and some

people in attendance at the meetings believe corporations would not want to fund anything associated with the Civil War. Along the corporation line, it was suggested that corporations, which had received tax breaks when coming to the state, should be asked for funds for the observance. At one meeting, someone suggested that due to the economic impact of the observance on the state's economy from tourists the State Chamber of Commerce should be involved in the observance and should be given a seat on the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board. Again due to the tourist impact, the hotel industry was suggested as a possible funding source. It was also suggested to work to see if hotel taxes could be earmarked for the sesquicentennial. Accommodations' tax was also mentioned as a possible funding source as well as revenue from movies made in South Carolina.

Other possible sources of funding include Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, Heritage Corridor, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts and the South Carolina Committee for the Humanities.

Another possibility for funding the observance would be to sell a number of commemorative items. Some of the items suggested included jewelry items such as charms, various coins and medallions, publications, art works, and tee shirts.

Several participants doubted there would be much federal or state money available for the observance and suggested that groups planning sesquicentennial activities should look to their cities and counties for assistance.

The third question asked at the meetings is what activities should be done for the sesquicentennial observance. Among the ideas suggested follow:

- Host a major web site
- Establish Civil War trails and other related trails to bring tourists to the state
- Prepare a Civil War brochure with listing of all relevant state historical markers, hard copy as well as posted on web site
- Establish a Speaker's Bureau for schools and for civic and patriotic organizations
- Involve the higher education community to plan appropriate seminars and programs for the academic community as well as the general public
- Develop programs on what life was like for the average family both black and white during the Civil War era
- Promote the preservation of Civil War battlefields and other Civil War sites
- Highlight the role that African Americans played in the Civil War
- Compile an appropriate reading list about the Civil War era and its participants to be distributed to schools throughout the state
- Plan a series of local symposiums around the state to focus on history of the region
- Encourage family reunions in black communities around the state and collect oral histories of the Civil War from the reunion participants
- Promote the inclusion of upstate stories that happened during the Civil War
- Develop a major exhibition about the Civil War in SC, have a smaller traveling one, and develop panels that could go to small local museums
- Promote and encourage battle reenactments such as River's Bridge, Battle of Aiken, Potter's Raid, Secessionville, Ft. Wagner, Ft. Sumter, Honey Hill, and others as well as promoting living history demonstrations for the observance

- Plan concerts with period music and host a major concert on the State House grounds each year during the observance
- Plan a series of programs focusing on the home front, highlighting the role of children and women during the Civil War
- Partner with ETV to produce programs on the Civil War and related issues
- Promote the teaching of SC history in public schools and higher education
- Postage stamps
- Medallions and coins
- Fireworks displays
- Special observances for the signing of the Ordinance of Secession and the firing on Fort Sumter
- Face up to the realities of the period on ALL SIDES
- Reprint articles from the centennial that appeared in the Post Courier and in the 1965 supplement from The State on the burning of Columbia
- Promote archaeology projects for Civil War battlefields and sites
- Promote genealogy on line and tie that to Civil War related records such as pension applications
- Produce biographies of Civil War heroes
- Make the observance inclusive, using the Emancipation Proclamation to highlight the role of African Americans in SC during the time
- Teach the history of the Civil War period in the state's schools, using the Teaching American history program
- Raise money to restore Civil War era flags, publicize these, produce a publication about these, and sponsor tour of these around the state
- Acquire funding for purchasing and publishing Civil War materials
- Preserve materials from the Civil War period and make them accessible to the public
- South Carolina in your attic
- "Watch Night" service at the end of the year at one of the historic churches in the Gullah/Geechee Nation to show where the minds of the enslaved were during the Civil War
- A special series of re-enactments in different parts of the Gullah/Geechee Nation that depict the lifestyles of the enslaved people, those that went on to serve in the 1st SC Volunteer Regiment, and the voices of the people like Edward Filbrick, Laura Towne, Ellen Murray, and Charlotte Forten would be incorporated in this as well
- Special showings and panel discussions of films related to the Civil War and concluding with the film, "Reconstruction: The Second Civil War."
- "Skirt of Arms: Women's Voices during the Civil War," a living exhibition. This would be a series of women speaking the words from the journals of women who lived during the Civil War era

The fourth question asked at the meetings is what should be the lasting legacy of the observance. Among the ideas suggested follow:

- Capitalize on the state's rich history and make the observance one that will be remembered as a fun as well as an educational event
- Establish a Civil War Center that will be sustained after 2015
- Develop a list of all SC veterans, both black and white, and erect a monument with the names of those who died in the Civil War
- Produce publications of various units
- Develop accurate educational resources to be distributed in the state's schools

- Work for the preservation of Civil War sites as well as other historic sites
- Teach teachers about Civil War history
- Develop tour maps to be printed and placed on the web
- Get Civil War history placed in core educational tests
- Make the month of May Confederate Memorial Month
- Take original manuscripts such as the Ordinance of Secession to the public
- Provide funds for the maintenance of cemeteries in general and Civil War ones in particular
- Work to have SC history required of all students in the state's schools
- Historical accuracy
- Tourism money
- Extend the commemoration beyond 2015, focus on Reconstruction events and personalities
- Better race relations; work to get an accurate picture of the Civil War for 1/3 of the state's population
- Better understanding of events leading up to the Civil War and the causes of the Civil War
- Hold a memorial service for the Union soldiers who were imprisoned and died at Florence stockade
- Plan now for the bicentennial of the Civil War by keeping detailed records of the sesquicentennial observance
- Better race relations
- Civil War was the defining event in our state's and nation's history and out of the conflict came unity---celebration of the rejoining of the nation
- An opportunity to enhance the image of the state and to show the nation how far we have come as a state
- 50 years from now, people will see that the observance was inclusive; we were accurate; we told the truth; we enhanced the image of the state, and out of the observance came unity and a renewed sense of purpose as citizens of the state
- Make the sesquicentennial a model for the 200th anniversary.