

SC Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board Meeting

SC Department of Archives and History

11:00 A.M.

September 25, 2009

Members of the advisory board attending: Eric Emerson, Robert Rosen, Andrew Billingsley, Randy Burbage, Bob Dodson, Ted Gragg, Robin Copp, Claude Sinclair, Corky Huey, Faye Jensen, Bernie Wright, Fritz Hamer, Armand Derfner, and Allen Roberson. Others attending: Patrick McCawley, Jeff Grigg, Krissy Johnson, Steve Longcrier, and Ben Hornsby.

Each person after introducing himself or herself noted what they were planning to do for the sesquicentennial observance and /or what their expertise was concerning the Civil War. Hamer noted that the State Museum was planning several in-houses exhibits; Roberson of the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum mentioned an exhibit based on the McCrae papers and research with them; Huey is especially interested in the blockade of Charleston and its significance; Jensen representing the South Carolina Historical Society related that the organization was planning an exhibit and a PowerPoint presentation and was working with other Charleston educational and historical groups to promote and plan for the sesquicentennial observance; Gragg noted his association with the Myrtle Beach Confederate Museum and the Pee Dee Research and Recovery team; Burbage of the Sons of Confederate Veterans mentioned that the group had a number of activities and programs (teacher guides, monument to the Ordinance of Secession signers, and re-enactments) planned to commemorate the sesquicentennial; Dobson of NPS is waiting for direction from new director and noted that the Office of Tourism in the NPS is working with various states on Civil War trails; Copp of the South Caroliniana Library noted the digitization project which will include newspapers of the Civil War and post period as well as other documents from its collection; Sinclair said the Palmetto Battalion was planning a week-long living history event at the time of the firing on Ft. Sumter; Billingsley noted his book, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, on Robert Smalls; Wright, representing Michael Allen, Walter Mack, and Jannie Harriot stressed the importance of noting the role of African Americans during the Civil War era and emphasized that Penn Center came out of the Civil War; Derfner representing Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture mentioned various related programs such as one for the Lincoln bicentennial and Armistead and said other programs and exhibits were planned for the sesquicentennial; Rosen, reported on the developing plans of the Ft. Sumter Ft. Moultrie Trust for the sesquicentennial and noted the organization's web site, (www.sccivilwar.org) as well as plans to partner with the City of Charleston, College of Charleston and others to have a program and

seminar for the weekend around December 20, 2010 as well as to host an even larger seminar from April 7-April 17, 2011 to mark the beginning of the Civil War; Longcrier mentioned the Civil War Heritage Trail that his organization is currently developing; McCawley noted the SC Department of Archives and History is planning an exhibit for the sesquicentennial focusing on important documents from its holdings including those related to the nullification crisis prior to the Civil War; and Dunn noted some of the plans that the Columbia committee is planning to mark the opening of the Secession Convention there.

Rosen stressed the need for public programming to mark the sesquicentennial and wants to make sure that all sides of the story as well as all people involved in the Civil War get equal billing. He noted that is very important for South Carolina to proceed with its planning for the sesquicentennial as South Carolina will be "the center of the universe" on April 12, 2011. He sees the observance as a major tourist attraction and the observance can have significant impact on the state's economy. He noted the Charleston Symphony is very excited about the sesquicentennial and wants to be involved in a major way. He does not want South Carolina to let Virginia capitalize on this state's history. He noted that a number of organizations and institutions in the Charleston area including the Gibbes Art Museum, The Citadel, the College of Charleston, and the various municipalities are developing plans to assist the Lowcountry Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee. He explained that the group hopes to have the backing of the Post and Courier Foundation, the various area municipalities, and even the state. He sees the numerous Charleston groups working together to produce a major observance with diverse components that should appeal to everyone. Among the Civil War era events that should be observed are: the Secession Convention (December 20, 1860), the firing on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861), the fall of the Sea Islands (November 7, 1861) and the founding of Penn Normal and Industrial School (1862), Robert Smalls and the *Planter*, the Battle of Secessionville (June 16, 1862), Emancipation Day (January 1, 1863), Fort Wagner and the 54th Massachusetts (July 18, 1863), the submarine *Hunley* sinking the USS *Housatonic* and then being lost (February 17, 1864), the siege of Charleston, and Sherman's march through the state.

Dotson noted the Trust wants to organize activities so that they will not conflict with other planned ones and asked what do we save for a later date. Roberson noted that this was one of the goals that came out of the seven statewide meetings the need to have something permanent after the observance had concluded. He noted that Kate Boyd, digital collections librarian, University Libraries is currently working on digitizing a portion of the Caroliniana's newspapers and other documents. A proposed sesquicentennial project would be the digitization of Civil War manuscripts, documents, photographs, and artifacts. A group is working to write an IMLS grant to support this. The idea would be to work with local museums and individuals to find undocumented Civil War materials. These materials could be taken to various centers (Clemson, Columbia,

College of Charleston, and Coastal Carolina) around the state for processing. The host of the SC Digital Library is the Cooper Library at USC.

Rosen noted that there is much material already available on the web about the Civil War, and much of this has to do with battles and prominent figures. He wants to see a web site that is much more inclusive and addresses many underserved subjects such as African Americans and their role, women, home front, and material culture. In other words, work to get the total story of the Civil War in South Carolina out to a wide audience. The web site would serve as an educational tool to the general public as well as school children.

Discussion followed as to the Columbia and Charleston plans for December 20, 2010 and the sesquicentennial era. Charleston plans a reenactment of the signing of the Ordinance of Secession and the Sons of Confederate Veterans are planning to erect a monument to the signers and are working to identify where all the signers are buried. It was pointed out that many of them are buried outside South Carolina. Columbia is planning an event on December 17, 2010, at First Baptist Church where the Secession Convention first met. Other plans mentioned include the SC Sons of Confederate Veterans hosting the Division Convention in 2011; the SC Relic Room and Military Museum is planning three major exhibits based on the McCrae papers, its Civil War flags, and Carolina Campaign of Sherman's march through the state. Another event to keep in mind is the planned opening of the Hunley Museum with the Southern Maritime Collection in 2014.

Rosen wants the help and support of PRT to promote the sesquicentennial and feels PRT is missing the boat by not being more actively involved. Derfner agreed about the importance of bringing in tourists to attend the special events and programs and feels the efforts would bring in much needed revenue to the state. Emerson did remind the group that PRT had taken some severe cuts in its tourism promotion fund. Wright commented about the importance of making the commemoration positive and exciting the citizenry about the Civil War by presenting the Civil War in a realistic way. Again, the consensus was a web site is the best way to accomplish these objectives. A suggestion was made to see if the War Between the States Commission had any money that might be used for sesquicentennial planning and a web site. Roberson agreed to check into this and report back at the next meeting. Everyone seemed to be in agreement about the need for a well-organized and high tech web site that could be linked to other sources to tell the entire story of the Civil War era from the nullification crisis to Reconstruction.

Emerson asked the board how the Department of Archives and History could assist with the commemoration. Gragg suggested that a press release be sent to the county councils throughout the state and the chambers of commerce telling about the board and its role as well as encouraging the various groups to begin planning for the sesquicentennial. Rosen believes that a letter should be sent to the General Assembly requesting financial assistance in developing a comprehensive web site that tells South Carolina's role in the Civil War and that covers all

components of the various people, events, and issues associated with it. Anderson also echoed the need for a web site to promote events, issues, programs, and places. Fritz pointed out the lack of upcountry representation on the board. Emerson volunteered to write Speaker Harrell and request that his one remaining position be filled by someone from the upstate.

Emerson asked if the group wished to elect officers and an executive committee and there was unanimous agreement. The nominations committee will be Allen Roberson, Robert Rosen, and Randy Burbage.

It was suggested that the board meet quarterly and that the next meeting soon be scheduled for early December.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Hornsby, acting secretary