

**Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial
Commission Meeting**

June 7, 2007

John Q. Hammons Convention Center
3303 Pinnacle Hills Parkway
Rogers, Arkansas

The first commission meeting of the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by John Scott, moderator, with the following members present:

Carolyn Ashcraft	Charles Durnett
Russell Baker (for Dr. Wendy Richter)	John Scott
Jim Branson	Georganne Sisco (for Bill Gatewood)
Mark Christ	Alan Thompson (for Richard Davies)
Tom DeBlack	

Dora Kate Lee, W. Danny Honnoll, Bill Stanley and Jerelyn Duncan were not present.

OTHERS PRESENT

Marynell Branch, Department of Arkansas Heritage
Jackie Crabtree, Mayor of the City of Pea Ridge
Marilyn Heifner, Fayetteville Advertising & Promotions Commission
Monte K. Harris, Pea Ridge National Military Park Foundation
Glenn Jones, Lowell Historical Museum
Daniel P. Cockrell, Old State House Museum
William Black, Fort Smith National Historic Site
Bob McCaslin, Mayor of the City of Bentonville
Ed Clifford, Bentonville/Bella Vista Chamber of Commerce
Evie Blad, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Jean Landers, Rogers School District
John Hicks, Senator Blanche Lincoln's Office
Davenport Smith
Holly Hope, Department of Arkansas Heritage
Kelli Peters, Department of Arkansas Heritage
Total attendance was 23.

MINUTES

This was the first commission meeting so there were no minutes to approve.

INTRODUCTIONS

John Scott spoke about the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial program and its purpose. He said the centennial festival was huge but that this one can be even better.

He then introduced John Hicks, representing Senator Blanche Lincoln's office, Davenport Smith, and Bill Black of Fort Smith.

He then asked each attendee to stand, introduce themselves, and tell who they are, and their involvement or interest in the program.

Marynell Branch represented the Department of Arkansas Heritage by reading the commission's mission statement by way of a poem.

John Scott announced the evening's reception, to be held on June 7, 2007 at 7:00 in the Grand Ballroom of the Convention Center.

PRESENTATIONS

Mark Christ, of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, gave his PowerPoint presentation, "Arkansas's Civil War History: A Brief Overview". He gave an overview of the Civil War and described the Arkansas Civil War Heritage Trail program. He also pointed out various opportunities available in the six (6) regions:

Northwest Arkansas –

Pea Ridge National Military Park and Prairie Grove Battlefield Park are two of the most intact, best preserved battlefields in the country. Pea Ridge NMP is probably the best preserved battlefield in the country. John Scott and his staff have been restoring the roads and landscapes so that visitors can get a better understanding of what occurred there.

Prairie Grove Battlefield Park was identified as the only national priority park in Arkansas by the 1990 Battlefield Preservation effort. The Department of Parks & Tourism came up with a preservation plan to protect the entire core area.

The Northwest Arkansas Civil War Heritage Trail has targeted the Cane Hill Battlefield to develop a driving tour with a series of wayside exhibits that would interpret the entire 9 miles of the battlefield. They will work on getting funding for that in the next couple of months.

The Guerilla War touched every community in Arkansas and there isn't much interpretation available about it right now.

The Federal Post Colonies is a unique Ozark occurrence. This was an effort to combat guerillas that was later emulated by the strategic hamlets during the Vietnam War.

There's a great opportunity to do campaign trails throughout this region.

West Central Arkansas –

Fort Smith National Historic Site is probably the best known Civil War site there but more interpretation is needed there and at Van Buren.

Mazzard Prairie Battlefield Park has acquired land at Fort Smith but there is no interpretation there.

There is land available for sale at Devil's Backbone – an effort should be made to acquire it.

Northeast Arkansas –

Chalk Bluff is a county park that has some interpretation.

The City of Augusta and Woodruff County acquired some land at Fitzhugh's Woods Battlefield and have created a commemorative park.

There is no interpretation at the Hill's Plantation/Cache River/Cotton Plant Battlefield.

There isn't much interpretation of Civil War history at Jacksonport State Park.

Shelby's 1864 Campaign was all over the region so that might make a good driving tour.

Central Arkansas –

Reed's Bridge Battlefield Preservation Society, a small volunteer group, has been working for the last ten years to protect the core area of that battlefield. They have acquired about ten percent of the area through their private efforts.

The Little Rock Campaign Tour (Brownsville to Little Rock) has been in place for about ten years as an interpretation project that put wayside exhibits from Brownsville through Jacksonville to Riverfront Park in Little Rock. This is a template that could be done in other places across the state for the various campaigns.

Right now there is a group trying to acquire land at Brownsville so they can make a battlefield interpretive area there, including a driving tour from Jacksonville to Brownsville.

DeValls Bluff, which was a major Union cavalry depot and supply facility during the latter half of the war, has absolutely nothing in the town to indicate that the Civil War ever happened there. The Memphis to Little Rock Railroad between North Little Rock and DeValls Bluff would be a good interpretive tool to utilize.

Southeast Arkansas –

We're hoping to see something good happen with the Helena Battlefield in the next couple of months.

The Delta Cultural Center, which is one of the museums of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, is working toward getting funding to interpret the entire Battle of Helena. They want to acquire the Battery A site, one of the hilltop forts, which would be incorporated into a walking tour associated with the adjacent Helena Confederate Cemetery. This cemetery is where a lot of the casualties of that battle, as well as General Patrick Cleburne, one of the greatest generals to come out of Arkansas, are buried. We hope to see that come together before the Sesquicentennial.

A nice site at Ditch Bayou got some interpretation but could use some improvement.

Marks' Mills, the one Camden Expedition battlefield in southeast Arkansas, has a small state park there but there's also a private park that actually does a lot more to interpret the battlefield.

Arkansas Post National Memorial is a great resource for southeast Arkansas, both for Civil War and for Arkansas colonial history.

The federal government did a study of the Vicksburg Campaign a couple of years ago that ended up being a seven-state project that would interpret the campaign from the beginning but the project got shelved. However, it's a good plan and we could still do the Arkansas part of that project.

There are several contraband camps and recruiting sites in that part of the state and there's no interpretation of those.

St. Charles Battle Site is terribly underinterpreted and it's a very interesting battle that will bring people off the highway if properly advertised.

There are a lot of camp sites in the Delta that are deserving of interpretation.

Southwest Arkansas –

Historic Washington State Park is the best site in this area. One of the key buildings there is the 1836 Hempstead County Courthouse, which served as the headquarters of the Confederate government after the Union troops ran them out of Little Rock. It has been restored and now looks very much like it did originally. It's really a beautiful building.

Fort Southerland, one of the forts that protected Camden during that expedition, is a city park now. There is a private individual who has raised money to mark all of the fort sites in Camden. Another individual did a similar thing for Civil War sites in Arkadelphia, which will give you some idea of what can be done in towns around the state.

Prairie D'Ann and Elkins Ferry, the two Camden Expedition sites in Nevada County, had never been interpreted until a couple of weeks ago. An economic development agency down there got a grant to put some interpretation at the Battle of Moscow site, which was the rear guard action at the Prairie D'Ann battle. It was unveiled a couple of weeks ago.

The Camden Expedition battlefields are woefully unprotected and underinterpreted. There's also a story to tell down there of the Confederate efforts at manufacturing, where they basically created an industrial base where there was none.

So, the challenge for the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission, as we work together to help our constituents tell these stories, is to "think big and make it happen."

John Scott opened the floor for questions from commissioners as well as non-commissioners.

DISCUSSIONS

Some ideas that were offered from the attendees were:

- Brochures
- CDs, DVDs, books
- Collect unpublished Civil War letters
- Commissioning artwork & selling prints
- County chairmen (work by region)
- Emphasize long-term effects of Civil War on Arkansas & Arkansans
- Emphasize teaching Arkansas Civil War history – libraries can do educational items, etc.
- Exhibits/traveling exhibits
- How do we make Arkansas stand out from the other states? How do we bring tourists here?
- How do we make the Civil War relevant to the general public?
- How do we tell stories?
- Legislative packet
- Logo/theme for event
- Major Arkansas corporate sponsors
- Make the connections (pre-plan events)
- Organize funding
- Pook Turtle Project at www.pookturtleproject.org
- Reenactments
- Restoration of monuments
- Sanction events/commemorative memorabilia (license plates, bumper stickers)
- Update the Department of Arkansas Heritage (DAH)'s statewide Civil War curriculum
- Website

John Scott then opened the floor for questions.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, September 18, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. in room 955 of the Tower Building at 323 Center Street, Little Rock. This will be the first full meeting of the ACWSC.

On August 18, 2007, the Old State House Museum in Little Rock will host its annual Arkansas Civil War History Seminar. All are welcome to attend.

John Scott thanked Mark Christ and Marynell Branch for their support.

Meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.