



VIRGINIA WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II COMMEMORATION COMMISSION 2016 Annual Report

About the Commission

The Virginia World War I and World War II Commemoration Commission (the Commission) was created by the General Assembly during the 2016 Session by expanding the existing World War II 75th Anniversary Commission to include observances of the 100th anniversary of World War I. The Commission is led by Delegate M. Kirkland Cox, Chairman, and Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Vice-Chairman, and members of the General Assembly, including Delegate Richard L. Anderson, Delegate John M. O'Bannon III, Senator Bryce E. Reeves, and Delegate Marcus Simon. The commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services, the executive director of the Virginia War Memorial, and noted historians also serve on the Commission.

Virginia's WWI and WWII Commemoration

The Virginia WWI and WWII Commemoration Commission began its first year by planning, developing, and carrying out initial programs and observances to mark the 100th anniversary of WWI and the 75th anniversary of WWII. Primary goals that guide the work of the Commission include:

Honoring our veterans: Honor the service of veterans, whose sacrifices can never be forgotten. When we remember yesterday's veterans we are also communicating to today's service members that they won't be forgotten, either.

Inspiring a desire to learn more: Provide opportunities for people to explore personal connections and highlight multiple perspectives of Virginia's role in WWI and WWII.

Connecting through travel and tourism: Make it easy for visitors to connect to museums, memorials, and sites in Virginia related to WWI and WWII.

The commemorations have statewide reach with strong local participation. The Commission continues its outreach efforts across Virginia, building on more than 300 local partnerships. The Commission enhances and supports local committees by (i) providing matching funds through the WWI and WWII Tourism Marketing Program, (ii) promoting local programs through a comprehensive Statewide Calendar of Events, and (iii) bringing quality exhibitions and programs directly to the statewide community. Commission staff held a series of regional partner information sessions in the summer of 2016 in Richmond, Bedford, Norfolk, Winchester, Blacksburg, and Prince William. WWI and WWII Commission signage is in place at welcome centers, and rack cards and window clings to promote the commemoration have been distributed.

The Commission maintains communication with the public in part through its interactive websites, www.VirginiaWorldWarI.org and www.VirginiaWorldWarII.org. The sites feature information on the Commission and its programs, an interactive map of places to visit in Virginia related to WWI and WWII, news and local events related to WWI and WWII, and a virtual museum of 3D-scanned artifacts from both wars.

Below is an update on anniversary programs, events, and initiatives in 2016.

I. Signature Event: Tribute to WWII Veterans

The Commission's first Signature Event, *Dawn of Infamy: America Goes to War*, took place on December 8, 2016, at the University of Richmond's Robins Center. Exactly 75 years after the United States entered WWII, 80 veterans of WWII gathered at the Robins Center for *Dawn of Infamy*, while more than 900 registrants, including 100 active-duty military volunteers, paid tribute to the men and women who gave their service.

The ceremony began with an Honor Parade of veterans led by Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, with music from a contingent of the Virginia Military Institute Regimental Band. Veterans' names and details of their service were read by Greg McQuade of CBS 6 TV, and each came forward, escorted by active-duty military service members, to receive a commemorative coin minted for the occasion. Remarks by dignitaries followed, including remarks from:

Dr. Ronald A. Crutcher, President, University of Richmond
Delegate M. Kirkland Cox, Chairman, Virginia WWI and WWII Commemoration Commission

Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, Chancellor, University of Richmond
Admiral John C. Harvey, Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs (USN, Ret.)

Brigadier General John W. Mountcastle (USA, Ret.)

Rick Atkinson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and military historian



WWII Veteran Olivia Clark receives a commemorative coin from Secretary Harvey



Dr. Heilman addresses the audience

Attendees stayed after the program to visit the 18 museums, historic sites, and organizations from across Virginia that brought WWII-related exhibits and information to the event, and also to visit the Commission's *Profiles of Honor Tour*, for which a ribbon-cutting with Commission members was held as it opened its doors to the public for the first time.

In addition to hundreds of attendees at the Robins Center, hundreds more watched from webcast sites as simultaneous recognition ceremonies were held across the state, making the event truly a statewide commemoration. Remote viewing sites for the program included:

Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Clifton Forge
American Legion Alexandria Post 24, Alexandria
American Legion Northampton Post 56, Cheriton
Caroline County Visitor Center, Ruther Glen
Cumberland County High School, Cumberland
Greenspring Retirement Community, Springfield
Nelson County High School, Lovingston

Pulaski County Administration Building, Pulaski
Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond
Shenandoah County Library, Edinburg
Eagles Lodge, Fredericksburg
VMI Center for Leadership and Ethics, in partnership with the **Marshall Foundation**, Lexington
York County Board of Supervisors, Yorktown

Response to the program was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees and participants noting and commending the organization of the event, the remarks of the speakers, and the impact of bringing 80 WWII veterans together for the event:

“What a magnificent setting it was to look out and see all these WWII veterans, to see them paraded and to define what they did. It was so grand, enlightening, nostalgic, and it was everything it should have been.” – Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, WWII Veteran

“As long as Virginia maintains its Commemoration Commission, the veterans of World War II will never be forgotten. My humble and sincere thanks go to all involved.” – R. Doak, WWII Veteran

“[My father’s] memories of his time of service are precious to him and he was so honored and thankful to see so many others who feel the same way.” – R. Underwood, Midlothian

“Thank you so much for all that you did to celebrate our veterans. It was just awesome and humbling and beautiful!” – W. Worrell, Richmond

“What a moving, well-organized, first-class event.” – R. Rinaldo, Newport News

“The speakers were outstanding, as was the cooperation and courtesy of everyone who was helping.” – S. Menninger, Midlothian

“Clearly much time, effort, and thoughtful planning went into making it such a success. My father (a veteran) and I enjoyed it very much—a wonderful memory.” – B. Burton, Arlington

“I could not have been more moved by the overall power of today’s program.” – B. Weaver, Gloucester

“The livestream went smoothly and our WWII veterans, families, and friends were very touched by the event.” – T. Hammond, Covington

Commemorative coins from the Commission were sent to WWII veterans who registered but were unable to attend, as well as those who watched from remote locations.

II. “Welcome Home, Dr. Heilman” Event

The Commission joined with the Virginia War Memorial on May 25, 2016, to host an event to welcome home Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, WWII veteran and Chancellor of the University of Richmond, as he returned to Richmond following a month-long motorcycle ride across the country to commemorate the upcoming 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entry into WWII. Chairman Cox presented Dr. Heilman with a commendation from the General Assembly at the event, which included a motorcycle parade across the Lee Bridge.

III. Profiles of Honor Tour



The Profiles of Honor Tour opens for its first visitors

Build-out of the Commission's Profiles of Honor Tour was completed in December, and a ribbon-cutting for the exhibition was held on Thursday, December 8, outside of the University of Richmond's Robins Center after the Commission's tribute to WWII veterans, *Dawn of Infamy*. The mobile exhibition, housed in a 36-foot gooseneck trailer and towed by a Chevy Silverado, features the stories of Virginians who fought in WWI and WWII, along with artifacts relating to both wars. The interactive exhibit includes a full-scale model of an M5A1 Stuart tank, visible from the trailer's exterior.

The *Profiles of Honor Tour* will travel the state beginning in 2017, bringing its interactive exhibit to museums, libraries, and historic sites throughout Virginia. Applications for tour stops opened in November, and Commission staff is finalizing the *Profiles of Honor Tour's* 2017 schedule.

IV. WWI and WWII Legacy Scanning Project: Document Digitization and Access

The WWI and WWII Legacy Scanning Project, in association with the Commission's *Profiles of Honor* project, was created as a partnership between the Commission and the Library of Virginia (LVA) to identify, scan, and catalog documents located in Virginia that are related to WWI and WWII. LVA is providing technical and content management support for the project, which collects documents and information to make them publically accessible. LVA is additionally aiding the Commission in running transcribe-a-thons using LVA's online crowdsourcing project, *Transcribe*. The Commission has recently updated its scanning equipment, which was used previously in the Civil War 150 Legacy Scanning Project. The WWI and WWII Legacy Scanning Project held its first scanning event on December 8, 2016, and will go on the road with the *Profiles of Honor Tour*.

V. Virginia WWI and WWII Tourism Marketing Program Grants

The Virginia WWI and WWII Tourism Marketing Program, administered by the Virginia Tourism Corporation in collaboration with the Commission, has completed its first round of grants. Funds are available on a 1:1 matching basis with a maximum award of \$5,000. After a series of eight partner information sessions in 2016, the Tourism Marketing Program received 11 applications for its first round of grants, which closed on August 31, 2016. A review team of Commission staff and VTC staff reviewed the applications and recommended nine for approval, for a total of \$40,080 in grant funding. The Commission approved the grants and transferred an additional \$100,000 to VTC, bringing the total amount available for future rounds of grants to \$159,920. A second round of grants opened on December 7, 2016, with applications due by February 15, 2017. Subsequent rounds are anticipated later in the year.

Grant recipients from 2016 are listed below.

1. Lead partner: Caroline County Department of Economic Development and Tourism

Project name: *Caroline County Commemorates Our Heritage through WWI and WWII*

Award amount: \$4,610; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$ 11,500

Summary: *Caroline County Commemorates* is a new cooperative program of the Towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal and the County of Caroline to commemorate the history, participation, and

sacrifice of the community during WWI and WWII. The marketing program will target travelers using the U.S. Route 301 and State Route 207 corridor that bisects these jurisdictions. Statistics show that this corridor is dominated by out-of-state travelers bypassing the often-congested Interstate 95. It is the intention of this grant application to turn these travelers into visitors for the partners of the program and the region.

2. Lead partner: Virginia War Museum

Project name: *Newport News Port of Embarkation in WWI*

Award amount: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$5,000

Summary: The grant will fund 30,000 18" x 20" double-sided brochures highlighting Army posts, the Newport News Victory Arch, and other associated historical sites established in Newport News during WWI. Brochures will be distributed and marketed to potential visitors, with the goal of increasing group and consumer visitation to Newport News.

3. Lead partner: Bedford Main Street, Inc.

Project name: *"Bedford Remembers" Campaign - Historical Markers for Walking Tour*

Award amount: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$7,297

Summary: The "Bedford Remembers" campaign recognizes and highlights the historical significance of the Town of Bedford as the hometown of the Bedford Boys and a prototypical home front during WWII. The project is the third phase in expanding the current walking tour to include historical markers, following the first two phases of redesigning the existing plaza and installation of light pole banners. The goal of the combined projects is to attract and educate visitors and residents about the town's connection to WWII and D-Day. Funds will be used to procure, install, and promote the brass plaques.

4. Lead partner: Spotsylvania County Department of Economic Development and Tourism

Project name: *Spotsylvania County WWI and WWII Commemoration*

Award amount: \$4,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$5,000

Summary: Funds will be used to inform the traveling public of programs, lectures, and displays that tell of Spotsylvania County's contribution to the World Wars, encouraging them to visit and spend time learning about and honoring veterans.

5. Lead partner: Military Aviation Museum

Project name: *Warbirds Over the Beach*

Award amount: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$5,000

Summary: *Warbirds Over the Beach* is a WWII-themed airshow located in Virginia Beach. The purpose of the event is to attract tourists to Virginia, encourage them to want to learn more about WWII, and to pay tribute to veterans by retelling their stories through flight demonstrations and reenactor encampments.

6. Lead partner: Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Foundation

Project name: *Women Winning the War*

Award amount: \$4,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$4,000

Summary: The purpose of the project is to promote the 100th anniversary of the United States' entrance into WWI by sharing the story of First Lady Edith Bolling Wilson's involvement in the war effort. The project will feature the museum's recent educational book, *How the Sheep Helped Win the War*, Mrs. Wilson's volunteer work with the Red Cross, and information on how women across the country contributed to winning the war. Partners will work together to leverage grant funds for use through advertising, websites, rack card distribution, and social media.

7. Lead partner: Shenandoah County Tourism

Project name: *Farms, Factories, and the Front Line: Shenandoah County's Role in the World Wars*

Award amount: \$3,470; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$3,470

Summary: Partners have joined together to create a brochure that will be used to promote significant sites, historical exhibits, and special events designed to highlight the significance of these events in local history. The brochure will focus on four different themes: (i) stories from veterans and widows of both wars; (ii) stories from the home front; (iii) historically significant sites within Shenandoah County; and (iv) special events commemorating these wars.

8. Lead partner: Portsmouth Department of Marketing, Communications, and Tourism

Project name: *To Face the Unknown: Portsmouth and the Great War Exhibition Marketing Campaign*

Award amount: \$5,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$5,000

Summary: *To Face the Unknown: Portsmouth and the Great War* is a major exhibition at the Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center in 2017 that will commemorate the 100th anniversary of America's entry into WWI and document the immense changes the war brought to Portsmouth. The proposed marketing campaign will generate visitation to the exhibition and the nearby Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum, while also generating visitor spending in Portsmouth.

9. Lead partner: Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism

Project name: *WWI and WWII Tourism Marketing*

Award amount: \$4,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$4,500

Summary: Interior signage, rack cards, and a landing page will be created describing how WWI and WWII affected the Alleghany Highlands and will highlight markers, monuments, and cemeteries.

Advertising for the livestream of *Dawn of Infamy: America Goes to War* on December 8, 2016, is also included in the grant funding.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, the Commission will continue its commemoration by marking the United States' entry into WWI and subsequent WWI anniversary dates, as well as by marking upcoming significant WWII anniversaries. The Commission will also host programs addressing history that spans both wars.

Virginia National Guard Military Ball and WWI Speaker Series

In honor of the 100th anniversary of WWI, the Virginia National Guard (VNG) is partnering with the Commission to expand the VNG's existing Military Ball into a larger event to be held April 29, 2017, at the Midlothian DoubleTree Hilton, accommodating up to 700 attendees, including elected officials, foreign dignitaries, veterans, and service members. The proposed schedule for the program includes posting of the colors, a welcome by the Governor and the Adjutant General of Virginia, speakers from the Commission, a formal supper, keynote speaker Roger H.C. Donlon, and a formal dance.

The Commission is also partnering with the VNG to host a four-part WWI speaker series to take place in March and April of 2017 in partnership with local historical societies and libraries, with topics and locations to be finalized by the Commission.

Battle of Midway 75th Anniversary Symposium and Navy Events

The Tide Turns, a Battle of Midway 75th Anniversary Symposium, will take place on June 2, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia, in partnership with the Hampton Roads

Naval Museum. The symposium will be free and open to the public and will feature speakers Elliot Carlson, Anthony Tully, Walter Borneman, and Timothy Orr. An invitation-only evening reception will follow for members of the U.S. military, board members from the Hampton Roads Naval Museum and MacArthur Memorial, Virginia's WWI and WWII Commemoration Commission members, NATO representatives, local and state representatives, and representatives of the Cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach. This will be the third joint symposium for the MacArthur Memorial and Hampton Roads. Past symposiums have attracted diverse audiences of teachers, students, military personnel, and the general public.

Preceding the symposium, on Thursday, June 1, Commander, Naval Air Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet will host a commemoration of the Battle of Midway at the Virginia Beach oceanfront, in partnership with the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors' Bureau, and other organizations. The event will include a flyover by F/A-18 Super Hornets.

WWI and WWII Statewide Teacher Symposium

In summer of 2017, the Commission is partnering with museums and historic organizations from across the state to host a WWI and WWII Statewide Teacher Symposium, which will feature a WWI morning program, a WWII afternoon program, and a tour of a local museum. The symposium will take place in eight parts between June 27 and July 26. Each program will feature breakout sessions hosted by museums which will vary by location to highlight local museums and partners. The *Profiles of Honor Tour* will be onsite at each event.

Sites and dates for each event are below.

June 27: Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum, Wytheville
Region 7 – Southwest Virginia

June 28: Covington
Region 6 – Western Virginia

July 11: MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk
Region 2 – Tidewater

July 12: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond
Region 1 – Central Virginia

July 18: Bedford Elementary School/National D-Day Memorial, Bedford
Region 5 – Valley

July 19: Longwood University, Farmville
Region 8 – Southside

July 26: Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, Winchester
Region 4 – Northern Virginia

July 17: Fredericksburg Area Museum, Fredericksburg
Region 3 – Northern Neck

Additional Upcoming Programs

The Commission has several commemorative programs in development for the coming years, including:

- LVA WWI pandemic exhibit partnership and speaker series
- Program marking the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, to take place at the WWI Memorial Carillon on November 11, 2018, in Richmond
- Program marking the 75th anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2019, in Bedford
- Continuation of the *Profiles of Honor Tour* and the WWI and WWII Legacy Scanning Project
- Programs and events throughout the state continually posted on the Statewide Calendar of Events (www.VirginiaWorldWarI.org/events and www.VirginiaWorldWarII.org/events), sponsored by local committees, museums, foundations, and historical societies

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