



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Center for Debate

DEAR FRIENDS:

There are many excellent museums across the country telling the stories of individual battles and campaigns, soldiers and leaders, and particular sides and aspects of the Civil War ranging from the Confederacy to wartime medicine. But when we opened the exhibit *In the Cause of Liberty* last October, we intended to do something different. The exhibit and programs at Tredegar deal with the people on all sides of the war and the ideas and passions that motivated them to act as they did.

We always meant to make the new offering at Tredegar a center of ideas, debate, and discussion encouraging people to consider the war from Union, Confederate, and African American perspectives. Our exhibit, of course, lays a great foundation for that kind of intellectual exchange.

One of our early visitors said that he had never come across an exhibit that made him think so much. That's just what we want! Another, an African American who lives in Richmond, said he would have visited much sooner had he

realized that the exhibit was about the people, not the battles, and he couldn't wait to bring his son to see what we offer.

In March we took a huge step forward in truly becoming a center of ideas. We held the conference *In the Cause of Liberty: How the Civil War Redefined American Ideals*. We presented 14 historians in two days and attracted thinking people from all over the country. The audience interaction was the highlight of the sessions. Those in the auditorium questioned the historians, who of course loved the challenge of give and take with such a savvy audience. See the main article for a full description of the proceedings, and see John McCardell's column drawn from his concluding conference remarks.

Spring has brought yellow buses full of students who are also benefiting from our new way to look at an old subject. The Gallery Programs provide hands-on experiences and the films and video notebooks encourage learning in many different ways. We will serve 5,000 students in our first school year.

Now we are promoting another challenging approach. In May, we have held two Civic Engagement Dialogs. Participants are asked to view the exhibit first and absorb the messages in the Legacies Gallery surrounded by banners depicting the legacies of the war as they have played out since 1865, and are still playing out. These legacies look different depending upon who we are, and some of them are therefore controversial. But the discussion was led by trained facilitators, and so the atmosphere felt safe enough for participants to raise even contentious and hurtful topics that have plagued the local community over the years.

We bring forward the people, the passions, and the legacies of the Civil War and place all in the context of American history. We hope honest discussion of different viewpoints will educate us all to be better Americans today. Come and visit and bring your ideas to our discussions.

Sincerely,

H. Alexander Wise, Jr.
PRESIDENT

LEGACIES

HOW THE CIVIL WAR REDEFINED AMERICA

ISSUE NO. 1, SPRING 2007

Ideals and Values that Shape the Nation

The Center's first major conference, held in Richmond on March 23 and 24, 2007, explored how the Civil War truly transformed how America understands the meaning of democracy. The conference, *In the Cause of Liberty: How the Civil War Redefined American Ideals*, was cosponsored by Dominion and Verizon.

Scholars from across the country gathered in Richmond to deliver powerful presentations on the conflict that still shapes our nation. In the present, the impact of the Civil War continues to configure our nation's core values. Speakers exposed the public to the legacies of the Civil War and addressed the question of how the war redefined American ideals.

"One of the forces behind our unique exhibit at Tredegar, this conference, and this new center of ideas is an extraordinary human being named James McPherson," said President of The American Civil War Center Alex Wise, as he introduced the keynote speaker, James McPherson, to more than 200 attendees. McPherson is a Pulitzer Prize winner and author of 15 American history books.

"Most importantly, to those of us involved with the Center, Jim is committed to public history. He has helped form our approach, our interpretation, and our exhibits through the generous gift of his time, his towering intellect, and his compassionate understanding of human beings on all sides who fought and lived the Civil War," said Wise.

McPherson began by declaring the war a "tragic irony" with both sides fighting for what they perceived as "liberty's ideals" first established by the American Revolution. North and South each saw a "sacred duty to uphold (those) principles" and fervently wrapped themselves in that legacy. Dual political and economic systems competed against the other, one predicated on slave labor, the other



ABOVE: *The Antebellum panel confers. I to r: Charles Dew, Peter Onuf, Christa Dierksheide, Wilson Moses, and Sean Wilentz.*
INSET: *James McPherson talks of the "tragic irony" of the Civil War.*



on free labor. The drive for territorial expansion was promoted primarily by slave-holding interests. By 1863 the initial goal of the North changed from merely maintaining the Union to setting the wheels in motion to abolish slavery nationwide. African

Americans "voted with their feet" and ultimately nearly 200,000 blacks would bear arms for the North. While McPherson pointed out that the Union victory left the Southern economy in shambles, national institutions such as the Post Office and a common currency took hold, as well as the legacy of national unity. He concluded that the South, including both whites and blacks, was "probably better off than if they

had won." He intimated that as separate nations it is highly unlikely that either would have established itself as a world industrial or military power, or as a shining embodiment of democracy.

In the remainder of the morning Peter Onuf and Christa Dierksheide agreed with McPherson about the ending, but Onuf stated unequivocally that

"the American story begins with slavery." The new nation was modeling itself to the world as a democracy and looked to Europe for recognition as a civilized nation. The North recognized that the United States would continue to maintain second-class status unless it could eliminate slavery.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The presenting historians enjoy front row seats while listening to their colleagues at the conference.





LEGACIES

HOW THE CIVIL WAR REDEFINED AMERICA

The newsletter of The American Civil War Center
at Historic Tredegar

Editor: Celia Luxmoore, Director of Development
Design: Communication Design, Inc.
Photography: Marsha Polier Grossman

OUR MISSION

To tell the whole story of the conflict
that still shapes our nation.

Our flagship exhibit *In the Cause of Liberty* is the foundation for our educational programming on the causes, course, and legacies of the Civil War from the Union, Confederate, and African American perspectives.

LOCATION

500 Tredegar Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
804.780.1865

Visit our Web site at www.tredegar.org

HOURS OF OPERATION

9 am – 5 pm, daily
Closed: New Year's Day,
Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day

ADMISSION

Children 6 and under: Free; Children 7 to 12: \$2;
Adults: \$8; Seniors/65+ and students (with ID): \$6

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At the conference reception, the bookstore sells a record number of volumes as the authors sign. RIGHT: John Motley, board chair of the Center, gives a lively speech.

**“I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO
SUCH A BRILLIANT ASSEMBLY
OF MINDS. I AM SO MUCH
BETTER FOR ATTENDING.”**

SARAH JOHNSON
IRVINGTON, VIRGINIA



Ideals and Values CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Wilson J. Moses presented a wide-ranging overview of African American inclusion in American society, including an assessment of W.E.B. Dubois' writings. Sean Wilentz presented more views of antebellum America.

In the afternoon, Richard Carwardine focused on Lincoln's thinking. At the beginning Lincoln sought “to maintain the old Republic — no more, no less” but throughout the conflict his course was “morally fashioned” and elevated to a loftier purpose as the war progressed. The North eventually embraced that purpose and solidified Lincoln's resolve not to rescind the Emancipation Proclamation. George C. Rable spoke of the Southern aristocracy which viewed itself as the “last best hope of mankind.” Rable argued that this position produced a “blinder-like reality.” Chandra Manning presented a comparative analysis of wartime nationalism. Confederate nationalism centered on race and loyalty, African Americans envisioned their inclusion in American society, while Northern white troops developed increasing hostility to slavery through their contact with it.

On Saturday morning a lively post-war session ensued. Nina Silber said “over time I have come to the sad personal realization that the North accomplished little through its victory, except preserving the Union. In the South much remained unchanged. Power returned to those who had power before the war. For blacks intimidation, Jim Crow, and sharecropping took over from slavery. Northerners ‘pioneered institutional racism’ by turning a blind eye to what was happening in the post-war South.”

Gary Gallagher spoke of the crafting of the “Lost Cause,” which “begins at Appomattox and works its way back in time, depicting the South fighting in defense of Constitutional principles and striving admirably against a Union war machine.” He concluded his remarks by stating that those Confederates “who spawned the Lost Cause would be astounded at its longevity, power, and pervasiveness, for even though it is retreating from the public sphere, it continues to be strong in the private sphere.” David Blight presented the African American dilemma “to forget or not forget, to look back or look forward.”

Reconciliation, as promoted by Booker T. Washington, preached that blacks could build their place in American society through industrial education.

Participants benefited from lively question and answer sessions and many private conversations with the historians, which offered a portal to contemporary analysis of the Civil War.

On Friday evening, participants attended a reception on the Historic Tredegar Iron Works site and enjoyed cocktails and appetizers under tents in the courtyard. Visitors explored the exhibit, bought books, and many of the authors were present to sign them.

Scholars presenting at the conference will publish their essays in a book. William Cooper of Louisiana State University and John McCardell of Middlebury College will serve as editors on the project to be published by the Louisiana State University Press in 2008. ★

Donald Thompson from his blog www.18thmass.com/blog and Jenny Didas, staff member, contributed to this article.

Historians Presenting at the Conference

Keynote Speaker

James M. McPherson
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Antebellum America

Charles B. Dew, Moderator
WILLIAMS COLLEGE

Peter S. Onuf
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Christa Dierksheide
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Wilson J. Moses
PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Sean Wilentz
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

War

William J. Cooper, Jr., Moderator
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Richard Carwardine
OXFORD UNIVERSITY

George C. Rable
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Chandra M. Manning
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Legacy and Memory

John M. McCardell, Jr., Moderator
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Nina Silber
BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Gary W. Gallagher
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

David Blight
YALE UNIVERSITY

The Exhibit Elicits a Range of Emotions

Since October visitors have made the pilgrimage to the new 10,000-square-foot exhibit *In the Cause of Liberty* at the American Civil War Center. The Center tells “the whole story of the conflict that still shapes our nation.” Within the walls of Historic Tredegar’s 1861 gun foundry are artifacts, uniforms, films, and photographs that educate attendees on the people, the passions, and the legacies of the war.

Tourists from countries as distant as China, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Scotland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have browsed the two floors of the exhibit.

“This is the best museum I have ever visited. Where can I buy a flag?” a New Zealand visitor said.

“I thoroughly enjoyed the exhibit. It is so well presented. I will be sure to bring all my Richmond visitors here,” a local resident said.

Children investigate baskets of toys and household items designed for young visitors in the Home Front area. They try on reproduction uniforms and experience the scratchy wool fabric of the blankets used by soldiers. School children are encouraged to explore and locate artifacts in the exhibit through a “scavenger hunt” of questions appropriate to their age group.

“I want to learn about Abraham Lincoln and how he freed the slaves,” an elementary student said.

At the end of the exhibit, visitors are invited to share their opinions by posting notes on the feedback wall. The effort to explain the causes, course, and legacies of the Civil War equally from the Union,



Consultant to the exhibit Edward L. Ayers ponders the messages in the Legacy Gallery.

Confederate, and African American perspectives has been met with appreciation by attendees. Some visitors have responded with great emotion to the exhibit. With respect for guests from varying cultural and religious backgrounds, staff members quietly leave some visitors with their heads bent in prayer.

The majority of visitors are interested in touring other historic sites. Offering maps, brochures, and directions is an active part of the daily exchange between staff and visitors. During a visit from an adult tour group from Wisconsin, the gallery buzzed with questions and interest in the artifacts.

When the weather is fair, visitors are encouraged to explore the grounds at Historic Tredegar, as well as Belle Isle, the Canal Walk, and Brown’s Island. Visitors tour the display of our on-site partner, the National Park Service, which explores Richmond’s history during the war.

A broad selection of books on sale in the retail store offers the opportunity to study history in greater depth. ★

Jenny Didas, staff member



ABOVE: Participants at the conference react to the presentations. RIGHT: Historian Chandra Manning and family enjoy the reception. Advance copies of her new book were available. BELOW: Conference sponsors are acknowledged.



A questioning participant challenges the historians.

“ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC. WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THESE SPEAKERS — OUR NATIONS FINEST HISTORIANS.”

JUDITH T. BRIDGES
MANASSAS, VIRGINIA



HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Teaching Us to Hope

This (conference) reminds us of why the Civil War continues to absorb us, as scholars and also as citizens. It is all about memory, and we know that memory matters, especially historical memory. From shared experience a culture defines itself.

Memory is also selective and personal. No two of us may remember this conference in the same way. And yet what we remember, and how we remember it, shapes our understanding and that of others, of its meaning, its significance.

Lincoln spoke of fundamental changes — a broadening and a deepening, to the point of transformation in what this country was becoming — a nation with definitions of nationhood emerging in sections of the country — competing, evolving, clarifying definitions, on a collision course. By 1865 there could be clearly discerned the outlines of a modern nation-state.

There is both a Confederate experience to be studied and a Confederate legacy that endures. And we are being prompted anew to decide as a culture what parts of that memory we retain as part of our cultural glue, and what parts we must reconsider. Each generation frames its own questions, and later will itself be challenged by those who may claim, and who may or may not possess, a clearer eye.

A modern nation-state. Lincoln spoke compellingly not of self-evident truth — history and experience said otherwise — but of a fragile proposition, never secure, always at risk, now wholly reliant upon the last best hope of earth. A republican *experiment*. A nation dedicated to a *proposition*. The years 1861–1865 did not constitute the final test of the fragile proposition that all men are created equal. Indeed it would be tested over and over in years to come. It is being tested still.

And so we conclude these proceedings, grateful to our participating historians, grateful to a large and diverse and provocative audience, and grateful finally and most of all that a place exists — at Historic Tredegar — that dares to present this story in all its complexity, mindful that what we have been makes us what we are, committed to telling the story from three different and sometimes competing perspectives, and increasingly confident that, in General Lee’s words, “history teaches us to hope.” ★



Excerpts from the concluding remarks at the Center’s conference, given by John M. McCardell, Jr., a member of the history faculty of Middlebury College. In 2004 he retired as the college’s 15th president.

Visitors' Voice

Comments from recent ACWC visitors

"It was a very balanced view of the period."

"Too much for one visit, but so very well done."

"As a student and former student of American history, I found this to be a very objective presentation overall, though a bit slanted toward slavery as the primary cause rather than economic causes."

"Excellent museum. I enjoyed the mix of media, artifacts ..."

"I loved the 'Think About This' sections. Films were excellent."

"It's hard to present something that still brings emotions out and the Center has done well to present as balanced a portrait as it can."

K-12 EDUCATION

Spring Weather and Shrill Voices

Spring weather has brought shrill voices and a buzz of excitement to the American Civil War Center. School children, ages 9–18, are arriving almost daily to learn about the Civil War from three different perspectives. As they explore the exhibit, visitors encounter students busy finding clues to a scavenger hunt, learning about the causes of the war in the interactive theater, or trying on 19th-century clothing — including Civil War uniforms. In the program, "The Civil War as a Constitutional Crisis," older students study our Founding Fathers' views and philosophies when they wrote the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. The program, "Walk a Mile in My Shoes," allows younger students to encounter the Civil War through the different lenses of Confederate, Union, and African American children and women. "Carpetbaggers, Scalawags, and ... Jim Crow?" expands on the student's current knowledge of the causes of the war and focuses on its aftermath and legacies. Students explore Reconstruction, the Jim Crow South, and the Civil Rights Movement. All courses meet the requirements of both the national and the Virginia Standards of Learning.

But the knowledge and the fun do not stop there! Teachers can grab the opportunity to teach their students about the industry and work force at Tredegar and Brown's Island before, during and after the Civil War. The program "Brown's Island: Tiny Island, a Great Role," explores Brown's Island and the role of citizens in the Civil War.

Compelling stories, fascinating places, inspiring artifacts, and voices and words of those who were there — it's never a dull day for children at the Center right beside the River James. ★

DEVELOPMENT

A First Year Challenge

When the Center opened on October 6, 2006, the challenge was to raise funds for operations. Having completed our capital campaign with \$13.6 million last June, we appealed to our donors for annual support. We will announce our total on June 30, the end of our fiscal year. Meanwhile, if you have not yet given to our newly minted exhibit with its balanced emphasis on the Civil War, and supported our education programs, **please send a contribution to the Development Office, The American Civil War Center, 490 Tredegar Street, Richmond, VA 23219 before June 30.**

The Center gratefully received a \$30,000 grant from The Community Foundation Serving Greater Richmond to support its K-12 education programs in 2007. Facilitated Gallery Programs are newly available in the Home Front Gallery for young visitors in school groups. ★

The American Civil War Center
500 Tredegar Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219



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Smithsonian Institution
Affiliations Program

IN THE NEWS

The Roanoke Times

Jay Conley

Within the context of what is to come during the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (2011) — "There will be more discussion about the Civil War and what it means for us today," said Elizabeth Paradis-Stern of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. That relevance is addressed as part of the exhibits at the American Civil War Center ..."

The Washington Post

Neely Tucker

"The American Civil War Center ... is a gleaming testament to what might be called a more modern memory of the past. ... Just six months old, it's already packed with school kids coming to learn about the Confederacy as a flawed participant in the Civil War, not as the Great Defender of (white) Southern Heritage."



Virginia Tourism Media Tour

In partnership with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Center hosted a reception for 20 national travel journalists in addition to seven African American journalists, mostly representing mid-Atlantic markets.

Blog — www.18thmass.com/blog

submitted by Donald Thompson

"Tredegar is not attempting to sanitize antebellum America, Civil War era America, or the post-war reconstruction of America. To the contrary it is telling America not to forget its past, to take a deep look at the reality of where we've been, and potentially where we, as Americans, are going in the future."



CALENDAR

JUNE

The Tredegar Battalion

June 16, 2007 • 2 pm • Free with museum admission, free for ACWC members

Living historians representing Knibb's Confederate Battery will present a program on the Tredegar Battalion, a wartime Richmond militia unit composed of workers from the Tredegar Iron Works.

Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America

June 24, 2007 • 2 pm • Free with museum admission; free for ACWC members

Join reporter and editor Andrew Ferguson for a conversation about his new book, *Land of Lincoln*, a curiosity-fueled coast-to-coast journey through contemporary Lincoln Nation. With a mix of presidential biography and popular history, and written in an engaging narrative journalism style, Ferguson has produced a hilarious yet poignant look at Abraham Lincoln and his place in America today. A book sale and signing will follow the program.

JULY

Collecting the Confederacy

July 14, 2007 • 2 pm • \$10 or free with museum admission, free for ACWC members

Join veteran collector and historian Shannon Pritchard for a fascinating look at the world of Confederate collectibles. Explore the history of Southern artifacts, relics, weapons, antiques and their role in our nation's greatest conflict. Pritchard is founder of Old South Military Antiques, the largest all-Confederate antiques dealership in the world, and the author of *Collecting the Confederacy: Artifacts and Antiques from the War Between the States*.

AUGUST

In the Cause of Liberty: a Curator's Tour

August 18, 2007 • 2 pm • \$10 or free with museum admission, free for ACWC members

Join American Civil War Center Curator Jennifer Gaudio for a guided tour of the Center's flagship exhibit, *In the Cause of*

Liberty. She will share her unique perspective on creating the nation's first exhibit to explore the Civil War from three essential perspectives — Union, Confederate, and African American.

SEPTEMBER

The Legal League: African Descent Covert Activities during the Civil War

September 15, 2007 • 2 pm • \$10 or free with museum admission, free for ACWC members

One of the most prolific and efficient intelligence gathering organizations during the Civil War was the Legal League. Composed of Americans of African descent, the League believed that in association with the Constitution, they could end the tyranny of slavery. Hari Jones, assistant director of the African American Civil War Freedom Foundation and Museum, will speak on the founding of the League, its leadership, and its relationship to the operational activities of the United States Colored Troops.

OCTOBER

The Civil War Remembered: Union, Confederate, and African American Perspectives

October 3, 2007 • Boston Public Library — in conjunction with the Boston Athenaeum and Massachusetts Historical Society

Historians David Blight, Nina Silber, and Fritz Brundage

Union, Home, and Freedom: Passionate Causes for Liberty

October 18, 2007 • Harvard Westlake School, Studio City, CA

James M. McPherson