



2019 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 its 2016 Regular Session. The Commission is led by Speaker M. Kirkland Cox, Chair, and Senator Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Vice-Chair, and members of the General Assembly, including Delegate Gordon C. Helsel, Jr., Delegate Timothy D. Hugo, 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 Commission, in its fourth year, continued to plan, develop, and carry out programs and observances to mark the 100th anniversary of World War I (WWI) and the 75th anniversary of World War II (WWII). The Commission's work is guided by its purposes to:

Honor our veterans, whose sacrifices can never be forgotten, and, in doing so, communicate to today's service members that they will be remembered.

Inspire a desire to learn more by providing opportunities for Virginians to explore personal connections to WWI and WWII and by highlighting multiple aspects of the state's role in both wars.

Connect through travel and tourism by helping visitors to connect to museums, memorials, and sites in Virginia related to WWI and WWII.

An update on the Commission's 2019 commemorative programs, events, and initiatives follows.

I. D-Day 75th Anniversary Commemoration in Bedford

The Commission partnered with the National D-Day Memorial to host a major commemorative observance and gathering of WWII and Normandy veterans on June 6, 2019, the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The observance featured an aerial tribute, a wreath-laying, remarks from dignitaries, and a WWII veteran roll call with nearly 100 WWII veterans, including many veterans who took part in the D-Day invasion. Speakers at the event, which was attended by thousands, included Vice President Mike Pence and Governor Ralph Northam. Members of the Commission presented commemorative coins to each of the veterans during the ceremony.

The National D-Day Memorial additionally hosted six days of commemorative events in Bedford to mark the anniversary, and the Commission's Profiles of Honor Tour was open for visitors during the commemorative activities.

II. Profiles of Honor Tour

The Commission's *Profiles of Honor Tour* brought its interactive WWI and WWII exhibit to 18 tour stops across Virginia in 2019, its final year of touring. In its visits to schools, museums, libraries, historic sites, and local events, the mobile exhibit reached more than 4,800 visitors. In total, the exhibit reached 38,200 visitors between its launch on December 8, 2016, and its final show in June 2019.

The *Profiles of Honor Tour* brought to life Virginia's integral role in both world wars, highlighting the stories of Virginians who served in WWI and WWII along with artifacts relating to both wars. The exhibit included a full-scale model of an M5A1 Stuart tank and was housed in a 36-foot gooseneck trailer. The Commission partnered with Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles to staff the tour.

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

The WWI and WWII Legacy Scanning Project was created in partnership with the Library of Virginia (LVA) to identify, scan, and catalog documents related to WWI and WWII. LVA provides technical and content management support for the project, which collects documents and information to be archived and made publicly accessible. The project held its first scanning event on December 8, 2016, and traveled with the *Profiles of Honor Tour* throughout 2017, 2018, and 2019, allowing visitors to the tour to digitally preserve their historic photos and documents.

To provide immediate public access to the documents, *Profiles of Honor Tour* staff uploads scans, along with information provided by the documents' owners, to a gallery on the Commission's website. More than 9,000 scans have been collected during the course of the project. The Commission also archives images received via online submissions. For permanent archival in the state's library, all scans are given to LVA. The scanning project has continued to travel independently since the mobile tour's end.

IV. 2019 WWI and WWII Statewide Teacher Symposiums

In the summer, the Commission offered two final WWI and WWII teacher symposiums on July 18, 2019, at the Library of Virginia in Richmond and on July 25, 2019, at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum in Staunton. The programs, open free to teachers in Virginia, featured presentations from the 116th Infantry Regiment Foundation, the Library of Virginia, the National D-Day Memorial, the Virginia War Memorial, the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum, and 2018 Virginia Teacher of the Year Michelle Cottrell-Williams.

The two symposiums in 2019 followed four symposiums held in summer of 2018 in Abingdon, Fort Lee, Virginia Beach, and Triangle, and eight teacher symposiums held in summer of 2017 in Bedford, Clifton

Forge, Farmville, Fredericksburg, Norfolk, Richmond, Winchester, and Wytheville, reaching hundreds of teachers in each of Virginia's eight Superintendent's Regions.

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, completed its seventh and final round of grants in 2019. Grants were designed to assist communities and WWI or WWII-related sites in marketing commemorative events and destinations. Funds were available on a 1:1 matching basis with a maximum award per grant of \$10,000.

In its final round of grants, the WWI and WWII Tourism Marketing Grant program awarded grants to two partners:

1. Lead partner: Virginia Arts Festival

Project name: *Virginia International Tattoo: A Salute to the Greatest Generation*

Award amount: \$10,000; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$25,554.50

Summary: The Virginia Arts Festival's project is the 2020 Virginia International Tattoo scheduled for April 23-26, 2020, and dedicated to the "Greatest Generation." The 75th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2020 is a vitally important opportunity to thank the WWII veterans who are still with us, listen to their stories and the stories of those who are no longer with us, and ensure that the legacy of their accomplishments stays with us as a Commonwealth and as a nation. Commission funds will be used for marketing expenses associated with attracting out-of-region visitors to the 2020 Tattoo and to coastal Virginia.

2. Lead partner: Town of Colonial Beach

Project name: *Northern Neck WWI & WWII Commemoration Day*

Award amount: \$6,500; Amount of match from recipient and partners: \$6,500

Summary: This program will be a full day of events to honor veterans, including an opening ceremony with a color guard, a ceremonial band, and VIP guest speakers; educational sessions and discussions with regional historians; exhibits and displays of war memorabilia from regional museums; reenactors, vendors, and food trucks; and a USO-themed dinner/dance featuring a 1940s-era big band. Funds will go toward extensive promotion of the event across Virginia and surrounding states, including Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., to generate awareness, attract visitors, and position Colonial Beach and the Northern Neck as a year-round tourist destination.

In total, the Commission awarded 33 grants in seven rounds, totaling \$172,804.50 in Commission funds matched by \$440,142.75 from 119 partners. The Commission directed the Virginia Tourism Corporation to use the grant fund's remaining balance of \$24,195.50 to coordinate and market history-related sites in Virginia under the marketing campaign, "Virginia is for History Lovers," with particular emphasis on WWI and WWII sites.

VI. Continuing Statewide Initiatives

The Commission continues to support local organizations by promoting statewide programming and working with Virginia Tourism Corporation to make the public aware of the Commission's work and that of its partners.

The Commission maintains communication with the public through an active social media presence, email newsletters, and the Commission's comprehensive and frequently updated website, www.VirginiaWWIandWWII.org. The site features information on the Commission and its programs, an interactive map of places to visit in Virginia related to WWI and WWII, and a Statewide Calendar of Events highlighting programs hosted by local organizations, among other features. Commission staff regularly travels to meet and collaborate with local partners. WWI and WWII Commission signage is in place at welcome centers across Virginia, and rack cards and window clings are regularly distributed to promote the commemoration. Partners can also apply for use of the Commission's logo to aid in promoting local WWI and WWII initiatives.

In 2016, WWI and WWII commemorative coins were minted and distributed to 80 living veterans of WWII at the Commission's event commemorating U.S. entry into WWII, *Dawn of Infamy*, on December 8. Commission members and staff, on behalf of the Commission, continue to distribute coins to veterans and to those who contribute significantly to the commemoration of WWI and WWII, with gratefulness for their service.

Looking Ahead

The Commission will host a final major event in 2020 to mark the end of WWII, concluding the Commission's 75th and 100th anniversary commemorations.

A Better World Shall Emerge: 75th Anniversary of the End of WWII

The Commission will partner with the MacArthur Memorial, the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, the Military Aviation Museum, and Nauticus to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the signing of the surrender documents that ended WWII. The Japanese surrender documents were signed on September 2, 1945, aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. To commemorate the anniversary, a ceremony will be held on September 2, 2020, aboard the USS *Wisconsin*, a battleship of the same class as the USS *Missouri*, which is docked in Norfolk at Nauticus. The ceremony will be livestreamed and will feature readings from MacArthur's speech and a flyover in Missing Man formation. The ship's horn will blow at 9:08 a.m. to mark the exact moment of the signing, followed by a moment of silence in memory of those who died in WWII. Following the ceremony, a panel discussion, "A World Profoundly Changed," will take place in the Nauticus Theater, exploring the WWII generation and its legacy.

Staff contacts:

Lily Jones, Research Associate
900 E. Main Street
Pocahontas Building, 8th floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 698-1886
ljones@dls.virginia.gov

Rusty Nix, Communications Manager
901 E. Cary Street
Virginia Tourism Corporation
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 310-0285
rnix@virginia.org