

CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRUST

Saving America's Civil War Battlefields

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State Civil War Sesquicentennial Review

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust – Updated April 9, 2010

With the 150th anniversary of the Civil War approaching, many states have taken measures to commemorate the war's memory. As of April 9, 2010, twenty states have formed commissions or established initiatives to aid in commemorating the war, with two new commissions having been established since January 2010. State and local groups in Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia continue to take the lead in developing events around the Civil War sesquicentennial (hereafter referred to as CW150). However, budget cuts in several states, such as Michigan and Ohio, are hindering attempts to commemorate the conflict. Also, because many states have targeted 2011 as the true beginning of the CW150 anniversary, many events remain nebulous — for example, Arkansas and North Carolina have designated themes for each year commemorating the war, but specific events for these themes have yet to be developed. Nonetheless, state and private organizations have created a wide array of events, exhibits, and resources for commemorating the war, many of which are detailed below.

State Commissions

The following states have established official commissions to commemorate the Civil War Sesquicentennial, often through or in conjunction with the state's historical society.

<u>State</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Formed</u>	<u>Web Presence?</u>
Arkansas	Commission	2007	Yes
Connecticut	Planning Committee	Unknown	Yes
Delaware	Heritage Commission	2010	Yes
Georgia	Steering Committee	2007	Yes
Indiana	Committee	2009	Yes
Iowa	Advisory Committee	2009	Yes
Kentucky	Commission	2009	Yes
Louisiana	Initiative	Unknown	No
Maine	Committee	2009	No
Michigan	Committee	2007	No
Mississippi	Commission	2009	No
Missouri	Commission	2010	No
New Jersey	Committee	2008	Yes
North Carolina	Committee	2006	Yes
Ohio	Committee	2009	Yes
Pennsylvania	Planning Commission	2009	Yes
South Carolina	Advisory Board	2008	Yes
Tennessee	Commission	2007	Yes
Virginia	Commission	2006	Yes
West Virginia	Commission	2009	Yes

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State Civil War Sesquicentennial Review

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust – Updated April 9, 2010

Page 2 of 5

Alabama: Beginning in 2011, the [Alabama Shakespeare Festival](#) will perform two plays commissioned to honor the CW150; readings of these plays will take place May 14 through May 16, 2010. University of Alabama-Huntsville professor [John Kvach](#) received a grant from History™ (formerly the History Channel) to develop an interactive website for the preservation of memories of the Civil War in Madison County, set to coincide with the CW150. The [Birmingham Museum of Art](#) will also feature Civil War-related artists in its 2011 displays, including Nicola Marshall and Gilbert Gaul. The state also plans to highlight numerous other landmarks and battlefields.

Arkansas: Arkansas has a large CW150 commission which has developed a plan for the state's commemoration of the Civil War from 2011 through 2015, with designated [themes](#) for each year. Though Arkansas's official celebration of the CW150 does not begin until 2011, there are many [events](#) taking place in the state prior to that date, ranging from Civil War roundtables to dinners to battle reenactments. One of the state's primary efforts has been to emphasize and improve its historical markers by encouraging local groups and businesses to sponsor markers in their area. In February, the CW150 commission, with the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, dedicated the first Sesquicentennial [marker](#) in Little Rock, commemorating the 1861 arsenal crisis. The Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission has added a [battlefield database](#) to its website that can be searched by county, month, and year, giving a more detailed look at the Civil War in the state.

Connecticut: Connecticut has a [Civil War Planning Committee](#) established to aid in its preparation to celebrate the state's experience during the Civil War. The [commemoration](#) will begin on April 15, 2011, with a conference at Central Connecticut University and carry on through the weekend and the official kickoff on April 16 and 17, 2011.

Georgia: Georgia has taken multiple steps in preparation for the celebration of the CW150. A major effort has been made to update the state's roadside historical markers, highlighted by a [marker survey blog](#). The state has also joined with Tennessee and Alabama in the formation of the [Tri-State Civil War 150th Commemoration Association](#), with the goal of capitalizing on interest in northwest Georgia, northeast Alabama, and southeast Tennessee. Georgia governor Sonny Perdue plans to spend \$5 million, depending on budget cuts, on restoring Civil War battle sites in [northern Georgia](#). Local cities have concentrated their attention on CW150 activities. [Macon](#), for example, is joining in efforts to promote historical driving routes and Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails. Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park is conducting [focus groups](#) with African-Americans seeking ways to encourage more visitors and better emphasize the African-American experience in the Civil War, with results to be shared with other Civil War sites.

Iowa: Iowa has created an advisory committee for commemorating the CW150. The state hopes to highlight its [battle flag collection](#). Potential projects also include a book about Medal of Honor recipients, a traveling exhibit, and the preservation of enlistment records.

Kentucky: In 2009, the Kentucky Historical Society received a \$1,050,000 grant to commemorate the CW150; the state will focus on the theme [“Discovering Together: Kentucky's Civil War Landscapes.”](#) The state's celebrations have received a great impetus from Governor Steve Beshear, who signed an executive order creating the Kentucky Civil War Sesquicentennial

State Civil War Sesquicentennial Review

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust – Updated April 9, 2010

Page 3 of 5

Commission. He also announced a \$440,000 grant for the [Battle of Richmond](#) Park to improve structures on the site and to post signage for it. The battlefield expects a large influx of [visitors](#) in the next year because of attention from Civil War Preservation Trust and the CW150.

Maine: Maine's governor, John Baldacci, used an [executive order](#) to establish Maine's Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee in March 2009. The committee does not yet have a schedule of events or projects to be undertaken.

Maryland: Maryland's celebration of the CW150 began in Fredrick County in conjunction with the Sesquicentennial Quad-State Committee (Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia) as the state commemorated [John Brown's 1859 raid](#) on Harper's Ferry. More recently, John McCardell, Jr., gave an illustrated lecture on historical memory and the CW150 entitled "[The Civil War a Historical Memory—or Memories](#)" in Hagerstown, Maryland. Hagerstown also features an interpretive exhibit featuring landscapes, portraits, sculpture, prints, and archival material entitled "[Circuit of the Summer Hills: Mourning on the Losses of the Civil War](#)" focusing on the CW150. This exhibit will be at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts through September 19, 2010. On April 10 and 11, 2010, Bell and History Days will highlight the CW150 at many of its locations using the theme "[Maryland on the Eve of War.](#)"

Massachusetts: The [Framingham History Center](#) recently received two grants with which it will fund its CW150 commemoration. The plan is to hire a consultant to create "Civil War exhibitions and programs using the FHC collections, buildings, and stories as well as the town's sites related to the era of this great conflict."

Michigan: On March 8, the [White Lake](#) area conducted a talk on the community's involvement in the Civil War as part of its CW150 celebration. On October 8 and 9, 2010, the state will host the [Great Lakes History Conference](#), the theme of which will be "Civil Wars in Domestic and Global Context: Conflict and Resolution from the Battle to the Homefront." A member of the state's CW150 commission, John M. Dempsey, continues to provide excellent information regarding the state's Civil War-related activities on his [blog](#).

Minnesota: The Minnesota Civil War Roundtables are hosting a Civil War Symposium focusing on [America on the Eve of War](#) in April 2010. The Minnesota Military Museum plans to create an [exhibit](#) honoring the CW150 to open in June 2011.

Mississippi: In honor of the CW150, reenactors determined at the [Civil War 150th Leadership Convention](#) to honor ten cities between 2011 and 2015. Vicksburg will be among the cities honored in 2012. The city is also matching a [\\$150,000 Preserve America](#) grant to develop local CW150 events, including two new museums in the city. On November 23, 2010, Natchez will host a program on "[The Civil War in Natchez and the Civil War Sesquicentennial.](#)" Mississippi State University has offered to [house](#) the executive director of the state's CW150 commission once the position is filled.

Missouri: Missouri features several commemorations of the CW150, including reenactments of the Battles of [Pilot Knob](#), [Wilson's Creek](#), [Leasburg](#), and [Carthage](#); a [puppet show](#) about the Border War with Kansas; a celebration of the [Battle of Boonville](#); the [digitization of many papers](#) regarding Missouri and Kansas in the run-up to the Civil War; and an [archaeological dig](#)

State Civil War Sesquicentennial Review

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust – Updated April 9, 2010

Page 4 of 5

focused on the Battle of Marshall. The state archives also has an exhibit entitled [“Divided Loyalties: Civil War Documents from the Missouri State Archives”](#) that will remain open into 2011. Recently, Missouri governor Jay Nixon visited Jefferson Barracks and [signed an order](#) creating a ten-man Sesquicentennial Commission.

North Carolina: The North Carolina Sesquicentennial Committee is hosting conferences in 2011, 2013, and 2015, the first of which will be held on the topic of [“Memory”](#) in May 2011.

Pennsylvania: In Pennsylvania, many local groups are putting on CW150 tributes alongside efforts by groups like Gettysburg National Military Park. [Cumberland County](#) and [Clearfield County](#) are among those locales with their own CW150 events, though details about these events remain vague. The Gettysburg Sesquicentennial Commission created a [website](#) that lists events taking place in the town over the years of the CW150.

South Carolina: In South Carolina, the Low Country Sesquicentennial Coordinating Committee of the Fort Sumter/Fort Moultrie Trust has planned a seminar for December 3 and 4, 2010, focused on [“The House Divided”](#) at the Citadel. Another seminar on “Why They Fought” is planned for [April 2011](#) and will include speakers such as James McPherson and Edward Ayers. Many local communities are preparing for the increased tourism expected for the CW150. For example, in February 2010, the Heritage Library Foundation began working with the local community to secure grants to refurbish [Fort Mitchel](#) on Hilton Head Island.

Tennessee: The [Civil War 150th Leadership Convention](#) has included Chickamauga among the ten battlefields to be included in its CW150 celebration; the battle will be celebrated in [2013](#). The Tennessee State Library and Archives will be traveling the state seeking private and public materials to digitize and turn into an [exhibit](#) commemorating the CW150. On [April 24, 2010](#), the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park will offer a presentation at the Chickamauga visitor center on the events of 1860 as part of its CW150 celebration. The city of Clarksville and Montgomery County have prepared a new interpretive center for [Fort Defiance](#) and established a local commission to capitalize on local interest in Civil War sites, including Fort Donelson.

Texas: The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Texas Division and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, Sons of Confederate Veterans are organizing an event entitled [“The Road to Secession”](#) which will be held on December 1 through 5, 2010, and will discuss the critical events of 1840 to 1860.

Virginia: Virginia’s CW150 celebrations began in the summer of 2009 and continue apace. Governor Robert McDonnell declared April 2010 to be Confederate History Month in an effort to promote tourism in advance of the 150th anniversary. The Virginia Historical Society will display an exhibit entitled “The Portent: John Brown’s Raid in American Memory” through April 11, 2010. The state’s CW150 commission will also host its annual conference at Norfolk University on September 24, 2010, on “Race, Slavery, and the Civil War: The Tough Stuff of American History and Memory.” The city of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties have all combined to form a single CW150 committee and hope to put on many events beginning in the fall of 2010. The Richmond Civil War museums are also putting on many events, detailed on their [website](#). In January 2010, the [Civil War Chaplains Museum](#) opened at

State Civil War Sesquicentennial Review

Courtesy of the Civil War Preservation Trust – Updated April 9, 2010

Page 5 of 5

Liberty University in Lynchburg. At the Wilderness Battlefield, [Ellwood Manor's](#) restoration is intended to be complete by the CW150.

West Virginia: West Virginia has many events related to the CW150. In Berkley Springs, the Morgan Arts Council is hosting an exhibition through May 2, 2010 on [“Valor in the Valley.”](#) a display of Civil War art including 19th-century sketches of John Brown.