

Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation

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Mark Your Calendar

April 26-27: Tredegar Center cosponsors Richmond Civil War Day at the ironworks with Richmond National Battlefield Park and the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation. Come to the Park Service Visitor Center at Tredegar Friday evening at 7:00 to see our video, *Union, Home, Freedom*, followed by a showing of the silent movie classic *The General*, starring Buster Keaton. Saturday, 10-4, bring the kids for a look at the Gun Foundry, living history, music, reenactments, and a host of other activities. For more information, call 226-1981.

October 26: Tredegar Center presents *A New Nation Forged: Legacies of the Civil War*, a history conference open to the public that will feature some of the country's finest historians. Plans are still under development. For more information, call 786-1956.

TREDEGAR NATIONAL CIVIL WAR CENTER FOUNDATIONSM

Union, Home, Freedom – Tracing the Stories of the Civil War...

newsletter

Issue No. 1 Spring 2002

Center Affiliates with Smithsonian



Alex Wise (left), president of the Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation president, and Michael Carrigan, director of Smithsonian Affiliations, sign an affiliation agreement. (Richmond Times-Dispatch photo)

The Tredegar National Civil War Center signed an agreement on February 22, 2002, making the center a member of the Smithsonian's Affiliations Program. Created in 1997, the program offers nonprofit cultural and educational organizations greater access to Smithsonian Institution collections and resources. To date, 96 organizations enjoy this designation, eight of them in Virginia. The Tredegar Center is the first in the Richmond area to become an affiliate.

At a press conference to announce the agreement, program director J. Michael Carrigan said, "We at the Smithsonian have long been looking for a partner that we could connect up with to tell the whole story of the Civil War. I know several curators at the Museum of American History who are going to be absolutely thrilled to partner with you."

Tredegar Center president H. Alexander Wise, Jr., said he believes that the museum, with the help of the Smithsonian, can be a transforming project for the community and provide a framework for discussing the thorny issues associated with the Civil War. "If we can do that in the capital of the Confederacy, it will be a light to the rest of the country." □

Lee Panel Attracts 400

An audience of 400 in the Tredegar Gun Foundry listened with rapt attention as four noted historians read papers on Friday evening, February 22, 2002. The session, "Robert E. Lee: Symbol, Myth, and Reality," was presented during the University of Richmond's Douglas Southall Freeman and Southern Intellectual History Conferences held February 21-24. The Tredegar National Civil War Center Foundation cosponsored the session, which featured as panelists Lee biographers Emory M. Thomas and Michael D. Fellman, and David E. Johnson, author of a forthcoming biography of Freeman. Foundation board member John E. Fleming chaired the panel, and folklore historian Charles Joyner commented on the papers. The University Press of Virginia will publish the conference proceedings, and the Tredegar Center plans to make the Lee papers available to our supporters. We opened the session by premiering the promotional video *Union, Home, Freedom*, narrated by Morgan Freeman, which encapsulates the Center's mission of tying together the Union, Confederate, and African American legacies of the war. □



Historian Charles Joyner
(University of Richmond photo)

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President's Letter

H. Alexander Wise, Jr.

I'm delighted to send you this inaugural issue of our newsletter, and bring you up to date on the Foundation's activities. We expect to publish the newsletter at least twice a year—more often if the news warrants it. And we expect that the President's Letter, Historian's Corner, and Mark Your Calendar sections will be regular features.

Over the last year, the movement to build a truly national Civil War museum and learning center in Richmond has advanced considerably. The feasibility study, the business planning, and the building of a sound organization have each in their own way carried the project forward.

Still, while we have made every effort to plan this project in the most professional manner, ultimately its success will come down to who is involved. We are blessed with an extraordinary team: our Board of Directors, our National Advisory Board (including project historians), our Community Advisory Board, and the Foundation staff. Our design team includes Fred Cox of Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith, Architects; Bruce Hornstein of Pyramid Studios, media designer; Daniel P. Murphy of The PRD Group Ltd., exhibition designer; and Kym S. Rice of George Washington University, curator. With such talent on our side, we are surely on the right road.

I believe there are two additional aspects of this project that also help set it apart from all other Civil War offerings. One is the strength of an inclusive, positive vision. This project focuses on the lasting significance of the war for all Americans. In one sense, it is a project about the past. But more importantly it is a project about the future, and why the history matters to future generations. By showing how the war arose out of contradictions the Founding Fathers were unable to resolve, and how it ultimately vindicated three dimensions of liberty that define us as a people even today—majority rule, equality before the law, and government bounded by the memory of civil bloodshed—we put our interpretation of the Civil War on a different footing from others. At the Tredegar National Civil War

Center, the visitor will understand how the war shaped who we really are as a people, and thus the Center will help equip us to remain true to ourselves as a people in the future.

The second thing that sets the project apart is our commitment to collaboration with other institutions for mutual benefit. Working with the Library of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Richmond, we have presented to the public prominent scholars representing a broad range of viewpoints. Topics to date have included "African Americans and the Civil War: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives," "Why the Civil War Matters to Richmond," and "Robert E. Lee: Symbol, Myth, and Reality." We have brought to controversial subjects a level of civil discussion unprecedented for our community, and we have forged strong links with other institutions in the process.

In developing our exhibition, too, we are working with partners. They see the Tredegar National Civil War Center as an opportunity to reach a larger audience than they can by themselves. Our partners will include John Motley, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the Civil War Library and Museum, the Museum of the Confederacy, and others. By working with partners, we will bring together extraordinary and diverse collections in a presentation that is both novel and highly cost-effective.

In seeking financial and moral support, we have been gratified by the positive response we have received from individuals, corporations, foundations, and government. Both the state and federal governments have recognized the public benefit of our endeavor. The Virginia General Assembly continues to support the project solidly. The National Endowment for the Humanities helped fund the planning of educational outreach programs for both schoolchildren and lifelong learners. The Smithsonian Institution has made us an affiliate. And we are working on a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service so that together we can present the Civil War experience seamlessly at Tredegar.

To all of you who have helped in one way or another, thank you for responding as you have—with your indispensable interest and support. □

**Right Project; Right Place;
Right Time**

Daniel P. Jordan, Ph.D., President, Thomas Jefferson Foundation

"History," wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1782, "by apprising the people of the past, will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men; it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume; and knowing it, to defeat its views." By its very nature, then, history gives us the resources with which to preserve. This pairing of history and preservation forms the core of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation's mission at Monticello, and it is also why I serve on the National Advisory Board of the Tredegar Center.

The Tredegar Iron Works, like Monticello, is a National Historic Landmark—among a select group of the most important sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And of the handful of buildings surviving at Tredegar, the Gun Foundry is arguably the most important, because of its central role in the American Civil War. This is where the Center's museum will be located, in a building that will be treated with respect, adaptively reused, and well interpreted.

The Tredegar Center will present the story of the Civil War from the viewpoints of all the major participants: Union, Confederate, and African American. Each point of view will be presented as fairly and objectively as is humanly possible. To do so is good history, and it is what we strive for at Monticello as we look beyond the mansion's residents to illuminate the lives of slaves and free workers on the plantation, for whom the little mountain was just as much home as it was for Mr. Jefferson.

We must follow the facts and truths wherever they lead, including into controversy. The Tredegar Center will forgo stereotyping for explication and clichés for thoughtful analysis, even if the conclusions make some visitors uncomfortable, uneasy, even angry. I have always shared Thomas Jefferson's faith in the redemptive power of truth and reason; I know that the Tredegar Center shares it, too.

This is the right project in the right place at the right time in our nation's history, when Americans are more aware of our collective heritage than ever before, and when our sense of unity can only be enhanced by a shared understanding of our past. The Tredegar Center will help us get there. □

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