

Ohio Civil War 150 Advisory Committee Meeting

January 28, 2010

In response to Governor Ted Strickland's directive to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War in Ohio (2011-2015), the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) has appointed 15 Ohioans to the Civil War 150 Advisory Committee. Three more appointments will be made in the first quarter of 2010, effectively completing the 18-member body. Made up of individuals from around the state, the committee will provide guidance to OHS on programs and activities to ensure a successful commemoration effort at both the state and local levels. Members will serve until the end of calendar year 2015.

The meeting began with introductions from OHS Executive Director, Burt Logan. Jackie Barton, Coordinator for the Ohio Civil War 150 program, followed with an explanation of the statewide initiative. The committee was asked to share their perspectives and suggestions for the program. The following are notes from the meeting discussion.

Meeting Highlights:

Roles of the Advisory Committee

- The committee will provide guidance to the Ohio Historical Society.
- They will assist in planning the statewide initiative.
- They will share ideas and bring feedback from communities to the committee meetings.
- They can establish work groups (subcommittees) in order to meet the needs of Ohio communities and the CW150 program; subcommittees can include members who are not on the Advisory Committee.
- They will assist OHS in soliciting financial and marketing support.

Past Commemorations: Civil War Centennial and Ohio Bicentennial

- The committee discussed the lessons we have learned from past large-scale commemorations.
- The Civil War Centennial did not encourage alternate stories and perspectives to be told; role of African-Americans and women in the Civil War were largely ignored, and pre- and post-Civil War America was not discussed.
- The Ohio Bicentennial was successful in bringing people out to celebrate, and it inspired state pride in Ohioans; unfortunately, the investments in bells and painted barns did not generate lasting value for communities.
- The Ohio Civil War 150 program seeks to provide *lasting value*; the program can be used as a framework for change in how we view and learn history, especially through commemorations.

Community Events and Programs

- Many communities are looking for help to create events and programs.
- The initiative should encourage communities to use the themes of the interpretive framework.

- The initiative should encourage communities to create balanced events that are informative about topics that have been ignored in the past.
- Ohio Civil War 150 Speakers Bureau is needed; this could be accomplished through collaboration with the Ohio Humanities Council.
- The program should provide communities with a list of reenactors; this can be accomplished through the creation of a discussion forum on www.ohiocivilwar150.org.
- Some groups in Ohio are nervous that the CW150 program is an attempt to “consolidate” commemoration events. The program is not consolidating; it is a resource for communities to utilize in putting together their commemoration events and programs. The program was created in part to provide a statewide program to facilitate, support, and communicate about community-based events.
- Ohio Humanities Council’s Chautauqua is focused on the Civil War for 2011. With limited time and resources, it can’t be all over the state, and other ways to bring the story into focus are needed.

Education

- An education subcommittee, focused on in-classroom activities, is needed.
- This program needs to focus on teaching Civil War history to children. The Civil War is covered only through the 8th grade. We should encourage high schools to include Civil War-related courses and programs.
- Could we create a statewide youth program?

Marketing

- The committee discussed the importance of boiling down their objective to express a clear goal to the public.
- A public relations subcommittee is needed in order to utilize social media, create relationships with travel writers and help increase tourism.
- We should allow organizations to use the CW150 logo; this could be accomplished by creating an application process. Applications will allow us to assist organizations with needed resources and to keep a record of commemoration events for CW150 reporting during and after the commemoration.

Interpretive Framework

- Communities may be concerned that few specific Ohio Civil War sites were mentioned in the document. Specific sites were not mentioned in order to ensure that none were given preferential treatment.
- Some historians may dispute the number of Ohio enlistments that we included in the framework. Enlistments may refer in some cases to the same recruit signing up for a second or third time.
- How do we encourage communities to utilize the framework themes? We could include a description of the themes on the application for use of the CW150 logo and encourage (not require) communities to create programs and events that shed light on these themes.

CW150 Commitment to Diversity

- Advisory Committee members were asked to submit their recommendations to fill the three open seats on the Advisory Committee. OHS is committed to increasing diversity on the committee, so recommendations of African Americans and women in particular are sought.
- If women and African Americans continue to be underrepresented on the committee, it will be detrimental to the CW150 program goal to increase awareness of these groups' involvement in the initiative..

In Progress

- OHS, the Western Reserve Historical Society, and other history organizations are developing a collaborative NEH grant to digitize Civil War collections in Ohio.
- OHS is in talks with the Ohio Community Service Council to collaborate during the anniversary by utilizing Americorps to provide program support around the state and to provide service and learning opportunities in the field of public history for Americorps members.
- OHS is developing a way to incorporate Civil War themes into History Day by encourage students to choose Civil War topics for their projects. Funds are being sought for contest prizes.

Advisory Committee Members Present:

James Bissland
Tom Brinkman, Jr.
Bob Davis
Gainor Davis
Paul LaRue
Roger Micker
Bob Minton
Don Murphy
Representative Mark Okey
John Switzer
Catherine Wilson

Advisory Committee Members Excused:

Andrew Cayton
Dave Roth
Diana Thompson
Eric Wittenberg

OHS Staff Present:

Burt Logan
Jim Strider
Jackie Barton
Kristina Kuehling
Sharon Dean

Guests:

Richard Cooper, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Frank Dunkle, Ohio Humanities Council

Kelly Falcone-Hall, Western Reserve Historical Society

Gale Peterson, Ohio Humanities Council

Alicia Reece, Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism