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Governor Launches Effort to Commemorate the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the Civil War in Ohio

Columbus, Ohio – Ohio Governor Ted Strickland today issued an executive directive that creates a statewide initiative to observe the 150th anniversary of the Civil War in Ohio. The directive aims to help Ohioans rediscover the many ways in which Ohioans contributed to Union success and how the Civil War shaped contemporary Ohio and American society. The Ohio Historical Society has been designated to lead the statewide memorial effort.

Governor Strickland noted that the directive comes on the birth date of Ohio-born General Ulysses S. Grant, a Civil War hero and two-term U.S. president. “It is fitting that this initiative is launched on General Grant’s birthday, as he personifies Ohio’s leadership during and after the war, both on and off the battlefield. It is also important that we remember and honor the 35,000 Ohioans who lost their lives during the war, as well as the efforts of countless Ohioans who sacrificed so greatly to aid the war and reconstruction effort.”

The Ohio Historical Society owns and operates historical locations throughout the state that are important to telling the story of Ohio’s role in the Civil War, including three historic sites related to General Grant’s early life in southwestern Ohio.

The entire text of the executive directive is below:

Directive to the Ohio Historical Society

April 27, 2009

Ohio Historical Society to Coordinate Commemorative Events for the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Civil War in Ohio

- 1. The Sacrifice and Support of Ohioans Were Instrumental in Winning the Civil War.**
Ohioans played a prominent role in the Civil War. More than 345,000 men from Ohio enlisted to serve in the armed services during the effort to preserve the Union, and more than 35,000 Ohioans lost their lives during the War. Additionally, many prominent Ohioans provided political, military and economic support during this time. President Abraham Lincoln’s Cabinet included two important Ohioans – Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. Generals Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman and Phillip Sheridan provided military leadership, and Ohio has the honor of claiming the only military unit in history to include two future presidents - the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, which was home to William McKinley and Rutherford B. Hayes. Furthermore, Jay Cooke of Sandusky, Sen. Ben Wade of Ashtabula County, Gov. William

Dennison, and the “Fighting McCooks” of Carroll County each played important roles in preserving the integrity of the Union.

2. **Ohio was a Symbol of Freedom for Many Thousands of People and Ohioans were at the Center of Many of the Social and Ethical Conflicts that Led to the Civil War.** The location of the Ohio River helped make Ohio an important passageway to freedom for countless slaves who crossed the river into the free state of Ohio and beyond. Following the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Underground Railroad in Ohio became even more important in protecting the safety and freedom of tens of thousands of runaway slaves. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a citizen of Cincinnati for more than 20 years, penned the influential *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, drawing upon her life and observations in southern Ohio.
3. **Ohio Was the Economic and Political Center of the United States During and After the Civil War.** At the outset of the American Civil War, Ohio was an emerging industrial and political star. The state was literally and figuratively in the center of a country being torn apart by regional sectionalism and slavery. Plotted on a map, Ohio was the center of the U.S. population at the time. Ohio was also an increasingly important hub for commerce and transportation. The War and its aftermath catapulted Ohio into a leading role in the nation’s political and economic affairs. For example, after the Civil War, seven of the next 12 men to occupy the White House were Ohioans.
4. **Ohio’s Infrastructure Was Integral to the Union’s Success During the Civil War.** Ohio had more miles of railroad track running through it at the time of the Civil War than any other state, making the state not only critical to the war effort, but also an important symbol of the Union’s commerce and industry. This infrastructure proved essential in keeping the Union troop trains supplied with everything from horses and sheep to uniforms, weapons, wagons and food supplies.
5. **The Ohio Historical Society is Uniquely Positioned to Lead Ohio’s Commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War.** It is important not only to commemorate the historic significance of the Civil War, but to also celebrate the role that Ohio and Ohioans played in achieving this monumental victory. The Ohio Historical Society (“OHS”) is uniquely positioned with the expertise and physical resources to lead the state in commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Civil War in Ohio. OHS was a major coordinator of activities commemorating the Civil War bicentennial 50 years ago. OHS owns and operates historical locations important to telling the story of Ohio’s role in the Civil War. These OHS locations, along with the State’s other historical sites, can contribute heavily to telling Ohio’s Civil War story by allowing people to experience and learn from authentic historical environments, artifacts, landscapes and buildings. Moreover, OHS can utilize its contacts and networks with hundreds of local historical organizations, libraries, schools, and other groups to ensure that the Civil War sesquicentennial (2011-2015) provides a fresh opportunity for a new generation to rediscover the many ways in which Ohioans contributed to the success of the Civil War, as well as how the War changed life in Ohio.
6. **Development of the Sesquicentennial Celebration in Ohio.** I hereby direct the Ohio Historical Society to develop a calendar of activities to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the

Civil War and Ohio's participation in that War. OHS will also be responsible for:

- a. Forming a Civil War 150 Advisory Committee ("Advisory Committee"), which shall be comprised of not more than 18 members to be appointed by the leadership of OHS and which shall serve for the duration of the sesquicentennial celebration;
 - (i) The Advisory Committee will provide advice and input to the Society on programs and activities that can ensure effective sesquicentennial activities at the state level and in communities throughout the state. The activities of the members of the Civil War 150 Advisory Committee under this Directive shall be staffed and assisted by personnel from the Ohio Historical Society, subject to available funding.
 - (ii) The Advisory Committee may establish advisory workgroups that can include members of the public who are not members of the committee to assist the members of the committee in performing their duties. The Advisory Committee may adopt, reject or modify any recommendations proposed by an advisory workgroup.
 - (iii) The Advisory Committee may, as appropriate, make inquiries, studies, investigations, hold hearings, and receive comments from the public. To perform its duties, the Advisory Committee may also consult with outside experts, including, but not limited to, experts in the private sector, organized labor, government agencies and institutions of higher education.
 - b. OHS may, on behalf of the Advisory Committee, hire or retain contractors, subcontractors, advisors, consultants, and agents, and may make and enter into contracts necessary or incidental to the exercise of the powers of the Advisory Committee and in the performance of its duties.
 - c. OHS may accept donations of monies, labor, services, or other things of value from any public or private agency or person related to the sesquicentennial celebration or the activities of the Advisory Committee.
7. **Expiration of the Sesquicentennial Advisory Committee.** OHS shall ensure that the Sesquicentennial Advisory Committee expires by the end of the commemorative events or by December 31, 2015, whichever is later.

Ted Strickland, Governor