Richmond to Commemorate the 1865 Fall of Richmond April 1-4, 2015

“Richmond’s Journey” will explore the end of slavery and the Civil War

Richmond, Va.—This April marks the 150th anniversary of a transformative moment in our nation’s history. The fall of Richmond on April 3, 1865, foreshadowed the end of the Civil War and 250 years of American slavery, reunification of the United States, and the beginning of an uncertain journey into freedom for 4 million African Americans.

Richmond, Virginia, which stood at the epicenter of the Civil War as the capital of the Confederacy and the target of Union armies for four years, will commemorate this pivotal period in American history through a series of diverse and powerful programs taking place April 1 – April 4, 2015. Sponsored by the Future of Richmond’s Past, a collaborative effort of Richmond’s historical societies, museums, national parks, tourism offices, commissions, and cultural organizations, the four-day commemoration will feature special illuminations, programs, and tours of the city’s historic areas, allowing visitors to join in Richmond’s Journey: walking in the footsteps of those who made history 150 years ago and reflecting on what past events mean to us, as a nation, today.

“Richmond was the Normandy of the Civil War, and the fall of Richmond led to the end of the war and the end of slavery,” said Dr. Edward L. Ayers, president of the University of Richmond and one of the leaders of the Future of Richmond’s Past. “We’ve always viewed the Sesquicentennial as the commemoration of the Civil War and emancipation, and the events we’ve planned showcase Richmond’s journey from slavery and war to today.”

The full schedule will be available www.OnToRichmond.com and www.RichmondsJourney.org. Most programs and tours begin on the grounds of the Virginia Capitol. Highlights include:

Wednesday, April 1

- Christian Perspectives on Faith, Then and Now: Exploring the meaning of the end of slavery and the Civil War in Richmond through the lens of the faith community, then and now.

Thursday, April 2

- Program at historic St. Paul’s Church exploring the story of the Confederate evacuation and featuring remarks by Dr. Nelson Lankford of the Virginia Historical Society, author of Richmond Burning.
- The Burning of Richmond: A unique evening illumination of Richmond’s downtown cityscape will represent the evacuation fires with projected images on modern buildings. Guided lantern tours will lead visitors through the heart of the historic burned district and living history interpreters stationed along the tour route will share the stories of individuals who experienced the fires first-hand.

Friday, April 3

- Living History Public Theatre/Flash Interpretation: On Thursday and Friday, small teams of living history interpreters will appear at historically significant sites in the city depicting what happened in that place 150 years earlier. Depending on the day, passersby may hear stories from evacuating Confederates, newly arrived United States Colored Troops, refugees from the fires, or the city’s formerly enslaved African descendants on their first day of emancipation.
• **Morning bus tours following the path of entry of Union army units into the city** early on April 3, 1865; and walking tours throughout the city exploring the arrival of Union forces and what that meant for residents, both free and enslaved.

• **Self-Determination:** An evening program to observe the 150th anniversary of emancipation in Richmond and to pay ancestral homage. Expressions of self-determination evolve from a procession to mark and remember trading sites in the notorious Shockoe Bottom, the source of unpaid labor throughout the deep South. From the calling out of names to a new musical work, film, and a drama about the very African presence in the war, the evening will offer a powerful series of experiences to honor the Africans brought here in bondage, to remember their contributions and their forfeitures, and to empower modern generations with social reflection and action.

**Saturday, April 4**

• **On To Richmond! Blue Coats Enter a Gray City:** The arrival at the Capitol of a contingent of living history Union military units, led by United States Colored Troops, symbolizing the Union army’s entrance into the city of Richmond. As it approaches the Capitol, the unit will be joined by community organizations in a celebration of the 150th anniversary of emancipation. A brief commemorative program on the Capitol steps will follow the arrival of the procession.

• **“Richmond’s Journey in Nine Questions” – A “Pop-Up” Museum on Capitol Square:** Nine interactive stations – or “exhibits” – will invite visitors on their own journey through early April 1865, helping them explore the challenges they would have faced, the choices they needed to make if they lived 150 years ago, and how those decisions still affect us today.

• **The Virginia HistoryMobile:** an interactive museum on wheels housed in a 53-foot expandable tractor-trailer. Since the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Manassas in July 2011, the HistoryMobile has visited museums, parks, fairs, schools, and other sites throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.

• **Tours of Capitol Square and surrounding historic area of the city** to explore sites associated with the Confederate evacuation, the transfer of civic control to Union forces, the enslavement and emancipation of the city’s African-descended population, and President Lincoln’s visit to the city.

• **Family and Children’s Area and Community Programs**

**April 1865**

On Sunday morning, April 2, 1865, while attending a church service at St. Paul’s near Capitol Square, Confederate President Jefferson Davis received the news from Secretary of War John Breckenridge, “General Lee telegraphs that he can hold his position no longer.” The Confederate government and military evacuated that night. In an attempt to prevent Union forces from capturing stores of supplies, the Confederate Army set fire to downtown warehouses. The fires rapidly spread out of control, creating a path of destruction that consumed the riverfront, shops, and homes.

The next morning on April 3, Union army units, including United States Colored Troops, entered a city in flames and in chaos, and helped to extinguish the fires and restore order. With them came the emancipation of thousands of enslaved African descendants in the city. On April 4, 1865, President Lincoln, accompanied by his son, Tad, arrived via rowboat in still-smoldering Richmond, hoping to explore options for returning Virginia to the Union. As he moved through the city, he was surrounded by a growing and jubilant crowd of those formerly enslaved, eager to greet the man they regarded as “The Great Emancipator.”

**“Future of Richmond’s Past” Consortium**

The Future of Richmond’s Past is a collaborative effort among leaders of Richmond’s historical societies, museums, national parks, commissions, cultural and tourism organizations, and educational institutions. It was organized in 2009 to develop community-based commemorative programming for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and Emancipation. The Future of Richmond’s Past sponsors public programs, inclusive conversations, and special events such as the annual Civil War and Emancipation Day to advance a better understanding of Richmond’s shared history.