

First, on behalf of our board of trustees and my colleagues on staff at the Virginia Historical Society, let me welcome you to “Virginia’s Civil War Landscapes at the Sesquicentennial.”

I was delighted when Julie Langan asked us to co-sponsor this event. First of all, the subject matter is of great importance, and I will say a little bit about that in a moment.

But cooperating with the Department of Historic Resources on this symposium is especially satisfying for us at the VHS, because it illustrates the tremendous partnership that we have enjoyed with DHR for close to twenty years. In many ways ours is an ideal example of a public-private partnership. What we do complements DHR, and, I hope, vice versa.

The VHS are not a historic preservation organization---there are many in Virginia, many of whom are represented in this room, who do that work, and do it magnificently.

Or maybe I should say, our mission is not to preserve the built and natural environments in which and on which our shared history occurred. But we do preserve the evidence of those events: the letters, diaries, sketches, photographs, artifacts and a host of other types of materials that reflect the individual and collective human experiences of Virginia history. And the VHS is proud to be a venue at which those materials can be studied by researchers and a forum where they can be discussed, as we are doing today.

So I think you can see that our mission works in a completely complementary fashion to those in the preservation community, in fact it is inextricably linked. I

can't imagine trying to understand the events of the Civil War, to make meaning out of that human-created evidence, without being able to situate them in the physical world around us. I think it's safe to say that in no other event in American history did place matter more than in the ACW. And more of those places are in Virginia than in any other state in the Union.

That effort ties into my own personal story. Growing up, one of the things that fired my interest in history was a visit to Gettysburg with my grandfather. As the step-on guide narrated our car ride, I really believed I could see John Reynolds topple from his mount and hear the whine of bullets ricocheting through Devil's Den. The power of that place brought the past alive for me and probably sparked me in my career choice.

Of course, now I live in Virginia. And the power of Civil War places is all around me. In fact, their sheer number makes their preservation tricky. They are not the outdoor museum that Gettysburg has long been. They are places that intersect with our daily existence. And therein lies the rub. That, I suppose, is a big part of why so many of you are here today.

I am so happy that you all are here. One of the many things I love about Virginia is that just as the past seems very much a part of our present, there are many who are passionately committed to preserving that connection. That probably includes most of you. I hope the next two days are both practical and inspiring.

Thank you.