



## EFFECTIVE COMMEMORATION: THE CHANGING APPROACH TO OBSERVING THE CIVIL WAR

BY ROBERT COLBY

As the Civil War Sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary enters its second year, we have noted significant differences between this observance and the war's Centennial. These changes demonstrate a shift from national to local commemoration and from a celebratory view of the war to one cognizant of its toll and its multifaceted meaning. Through our work with the Civil War Trust creating battlefield tour apps for smart-phones, developing interpretive plans for historic sites, and collaborating on publications, we at History Associates have had a front row seat to observe the development of Sesquicentennial commemoration.

Due in part to the lack of a national commission such as existed in 1961, the Sesquicentennial has been characterized by locally focused events that emphasize education and create economic benefit for their communities. Coupled with varying levels of local enthusiasm and budget constraints, this decentralization has led to a diverse selection of events. Where the Centennial featured large events drawing tens of thousands, the Sesquicentennial boasts hundreds of smaller state and local conferences, living history events, and initiatives. Even with a relative dearth of large events, there is no shortage of ways that groups are reaching out to promote Civil War history and to teach its impact on their locality.

Given budget limitations, Sesquicentennial commissions and tourism boards work together in many states, making decisions with an eye toward attracting visitors and tourist dollars. While the extent to which the Sesquicentennial will benefit local

economies remains to be seen, there are some positive indications. Events in Manassas brought in an estimated 27 million tourist dollars for the town (though they fell short of the desired 30,000 visitors). The city also saw increases of 10 percent in hotel tax revenues and 14 percent in meals tax revenues from 2010.



Photo courtesy Gwillhickers, Wikimedia Commons.

U.S. Postage Stamp, 1961 issue commemorating the Civil War Centennial of the Battle at Fort Sumter, April 12-13, 1861.

Tennessee's initial Sesquicentennial "Signature Event" drew approximately 9,000 spectators. Georgia's Kennesaw Mountain has seen an increase of more than 127,000 visitors, with other sites also seeing increases. Beyond direct contributions to local coffers, these events provide publicity; Manassas reported that its events resulted in positive exposure for the city, potentially providing benefits beyond the Sesquicentennial. Heightened public awareness, local partnerships, unique event

experiences, and marketing have helped increase attendance at Civil War sites.

The Sesquicentennial is also notable for its somber tone and expansive focus. Thus far it has been thoughtful rather than celebratory, a reaction appropriate for the deadliest conflict in our history and for the ever-shifting collective memory of the war. According to James Robertson, executive director of the U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission, the Centennial celebrated the war rather than commemorating it. Understanding of the cost of the war, sensitivity to racial issues, and a desire to include all Americans have encouraged programs to engage the

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## Is Google Making You Fat?

### TIPS FOR CONDUCTING "LEAN AND MEAN" ON-LINE HISTORICAL RESEARCH

BY MIKE REIS

The amount of on-line content continues to grow exponentially, making the Internet an indispensable tool in historical research. Clay Johnson, on-line database expert and author of the cleverly written book *The Information Diet*, contends that with so much readily available on-line data, it is critical to make informed choices,

maintaining a "healthy diet" of information consumption. We find his point especially pertinent when the stakes are high, such as in legal issues.

Law firms have ready access to a vast array of information, and there are many excellent on-line resources available. This can represent a huge savings in time and effort in compiling research; however,

like an all-you-can-eat buffet, one must be careful-the buffet likely includes lots of bad choices. Without a research plan, it is remarkably easy to spend too much time and end up with a fat pile of material that is high in volume but low in usable information. In short, if your case has a historical dimension, it's critical to be an educated

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## ON THE ROAD

Members of our staff will be attending a number of upcoming conferences. If you'll be attending also, we would welcome the chance to meet you in person! Please e-mail [hai@historyassociates.com](mailto:hai@historyassociates.com) or call 301-279-9697 and let us know when you would be available to meet.

- **Mike Reis** and **Jason Gart** will be attending the Society for History in the Federal Government Annual Conference, March 21 in College Park, MD.
- **Steve Swisdak** will be participating in a panel discussion and Jennifer Randazzo will also be on hand at the American Bar Association's Annual Conference on Environmental Law, March 22-24 in Salt Lake City, UT.
- **Mike Reis** and **Halley Fehner** will be presenting a poster at the Manufactured Gas Plant Conference, "MGP 2012," March 27-30 in Chicago, IL.
- **Erica Haakensen** and **Lloyd Williams** will be attending the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, April 12-13 in Cape May, NJ.
- **James Lide** and **Zenobia Kozak** will be attending the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting and MuseumExpo, April 29-May 2 in Minneapolis, MN.
- **Ken Durr** and **Anne Strong** will be at our exhibit booth at the International Association of Business Communicators' 2012 World Conference, June 24-27 in Chicago, IL.
- **Anita Weber** and **Gabriele Carey** will be participating in the Career Center at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, August 8-11 in San Diego, CA.

## IS GOOGLE MAKING YOU FAT? TIPS FOR CONDUCTING "LEAN AND MEAN" ON-LINE RESEARCH

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and conscious consumer of your on-line resources. Here's a recipe for becoming so savvy, drawn from our experience.

### Create Your Ideal Meal Plan

Before you launch into the research for documentation, think carefully through the issue at hand and frame questions neutrally so as not to skew results. Capture useful historical context prior to embarking on your search. Make a note of any agencies or organizations you believe would have collected data relevant to your issue—the more precise you can be, the better. Identify your geographic locus, if any, as well as key people, building your list of the latter as you can. Then ask: what types of records are you most interested in finding, did these agencies and organizations create or receive them, and what's your critical time frame? You'll end up with a list of ideal data sets to look for, like "Centralia, Washington, city records listing factory sales in the 1940s," or "ICC shipment records filed by the Nickel Plate Railroad in 1972-1975."

### Seek Only the Healthiest Sources

Once you've defined your desired records, look beyond Wikis to get to the meat of what's available. Wikipedia and similar sites can be a good and even appetizing start to informing your search, but there are serious pitfalls to user-generated content. A college student once unobtru-



*The EPA has an extensive publications library that captures even elusive reports going back to the 1970s.*

sively inserted the phrase "And then he became a clown and died" at the end of hundreds of biographical profiles of former members of Congress (true!). Imagine that "fact" slipping into discovery! Enlist your law librarian or historical consultant to determine the reliable resources that are likely to have the types of documents you've identified, and where those on-line tools can best be accessed.

### Conduct a Well-Balanced Search

Many national papers such as the *New York Times* as well as a large number of local papers and trade journals are now on-line. Keep in mind that they might not be available directly from your computer; many are accessible only in person at a local or state library. The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., has numerous resources available on-line. Federal government resources on the Web have also increased exponen-

tially in recent years. For example, the EPA has an extensive publications library that captures even elusive reports going back to the 1970s.

### Build an Even More Satisfying Menu

Last, use your early findings to identify new leads. If you were researching for a Superfund case and found a *Wall Street Journal* company profile from 1956 that referenced a contract for missile components to be made at the site you're interested in, try to identify and learn more about who in the DoD led the contract or oversaw product development, production, and testing and created other records that may be accessible by other means. The article might mention an office or command whose obsolete yet pertinent waste disposal regulations may also be available on-line. Or, taken together, this on-line documentation may suggest that you could go after paper records of the same unit, held at the National Archives or a federal library.

There are limits to any on-line research—it's not all up on the Web and it probably never will be—but conscious and creative consumption of the on-line feast can lead to a very healthy body of research results.

*Litigation Research director Michael C. Reis manages a diverse range of litigation projects for History Associates. Contact him at (301) 279-9697 or e-mail [mreis@history-associates.com](mailto:mreis@history-associates.com).*



## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS: ZENOBIA KOZAK

Senior museum collections manager Zenobia Kozak joined us last year to lead a major project involving the move of a nationally significant museum. One project quickly grew to several, and now she leads our growing staff of museum professionals. A lifelong fan of museums, she got her undergraduate degree in art history from the University of Washington at Seattle, and then a postgraduate diploma and doctoral degrees in museum studies from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Her doctoral work involved studying the definition and use of institutional heritage within British universities. She has put that knowledge to good use throughout her career, including work at the BBC to develop and then manage their heritage collection. Like many museum professionals, Zenobia is very passionate about what she does. “I love working with the collections,” she says, adding “it’s not the signature holdings that I find most engaging, but the quirky, unexpected things you’ll find that have a special significance to the organization.”

## THE CHANGING APPROACH TO OBSERVING THE CIVIL WAR

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multifaceted, contentious nature of Civil War memory. For example, in 2010, the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission dedicated its annual Signature Conference to race and “the tough stuff of American history and memory.” This stands in contrast to the Centennial’s often contentious relationship with the contemporaneous Civil Rights Movement. Though certainly not free from controversy, the Sesquicentennial thus far has focused on the war’s cost and legacy. For example, Virginia’s governor, after initially proclaiming a “Confederate History Month,” quickly backtracked and declared “Civil War History in Virginia Month” instead. He praised the war for bringing the end of slavery and enunciated the legacy of the “cost and pain of the War.” Additionally, President Obama’s dedication of Fortress Monroe, a critical site in the African-American history of the war, as a National Monument shows a new emphasis on the war beyond the battlefield. We hope that in the years to come the Sesquicentennial will continue to draw attention to historical education and preservation, and will benefit communities both financially and in their efforts to preserve the war’s legacy.

*Historian Robert Colby conducts a variety of historical and litigation research for History Associates. He has particular expertise in the Civil War and participated in this year’s Virginia Signature Conference on Civil War Sesquicentennial. Contact Robert at (301) 279-9697 or e-mail [rcolby@historyassociates.com](mailto:rcolby@historyassociates.com).*

## THE BEST CLIENTS IN HISTORY

### AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

continued work on exhibits for several American military cemeteries in Europe, including Cambridge, England; Sicily-Rome, Italy; Meuse-Argonne, France; and Flanders Field, Belgium.

### BLOUNT FINE FOODS

concluded the research and writing of the company’s history book.

### GLAXOSMITHKLINE

began development of the GSK Heritage Assets Reference Portal.

### GOLSON MEDIA

continued research in support of *Social History of Crime and Punishment in America: An Encyclopedia*.

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

began preparation of Historic Resource Study for George Washington Carver National Monument in Missouri.

### ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART | SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

continued minimal-level processing of gallery records.

### LITIGATION RESEARCH

provided expert witness testimony in California-continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, and Washington, D.C.



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History Associates serves clients nationwide and around the world.

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# WAR OF 1812 CENTENNIAL: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



Photo courtesy Maryland State Archives

1. She was hired in 1813 to create the garrison flag, now known as the Star-Spangled Banner, that flew over Fort McHenry in 1814.
  - A) Betsy Ross
  - B) Mary Pickersgill
  - B) Rebecca Young

Congratulations to Christian Higgins of Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, winner of the Fall 2011 Test Your Knowledge Quiz. He correctly answered the following: A. Syracuse University, B. Louisiana State University (LSU), and C. University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).



Photo courtesy Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog

2. Why was Francis Scott Key on a British ship during the Battle of Baltimore?
  - A) He was negotiating the release of prisoners.
  - B) He was acting as a spy for the U.S. militia.
  - C) He was rescued when his sloop sank in the battle.

E-mail your answers along with your contact information to Anne Strong at [astrong@historyassociates.com](mailto:astrong@historyassociates.com) by March 31, 2012. Correct responses will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card!



Courtesy Library of Congress  
1910 painting by Edward Percy Moran

3. Why did the Battle of New Orleans commence even after the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war, had been signed by both parties?
  - A) The U.S. Senate had not yet ratified the treaty.
  - B) Official dispatches did not get to the combatants in time.
  - C) Major General Andrew Jackson was provoked by the British.

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 F 301.279.9224  
 T 301.279.9697  
 ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850  
 300 N. STONESTREET AVE.  
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