

Starkville makes plans to celebrate local history

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By GWEN SISSON
sdnlife@bellsouth.net

What do Ulysses S. Grant, Stephen D. Lee and B.F. Grierson have in common?
Starkville.

A broken historical marker detailing the most famous Civil War activity in Starkville history began the conversation. And as the nation celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, local historians have begun discussing ways to involve the community in the Civil War Sesquicentennial Celebrations.

“No one has ever sat down to discuss ways to commemorate this angle of our community’s history,” said Starkville Police Chief David Lindley. “As we are making plans for the celebration, it could grow into something more permanent that can be an avenue for historic tourism.”

Lindley said with the Grant Collection at Mississippi State University, Starkville’s history with Grierson’s Raid, the association with Stephen D. Lee, MSU’s first president and a huge Civil War figure, and the Civil War Arsenal created by Duffy Neubauer, the celebration is a great opportunity to create a Civil War Tourism package that could benefit the community.

The broken historical marker that began the Civil War conversation denotes Grierson’s Raid as it moved through Starkville on April 21, 1863. The marker was recently broken, by what is suspected to be either a motor vehicle accident or an act of vandalism.

Costs to replace the broken marker and post will be between \$1,800 and \$2,000 from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

The Grant Association has pledged to match funds for the replacement plaque up to \$1,000.

As fundraising efforts get underway, Starkville's Sesquicentennial Commemoration Committee is making plans to dedicate the new plaque around the official 150th Anniversary of Grierson's Raid, as it moved through Starkville. Serving on Starkville's Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration Committee are some of the leading authorities on the Civil War in the state of Mississippi and beyond, including Dr. John Marszalek of the Grant Association; Dr. Mike Ballard, author of "The Civil War in Mississippi;" Elizabeth Coggins of the Grant Association; and Duffy Neubauer, curator of Starkville Civil War Arsenal. Local historians and public figures also serving on the committee include Starkville Mayor Parker Wiseman, Michelle Jones of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and Starkville Police Chief David Lindley.

Starkville's Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration program is tentatively set for April 13, 2013. A variety of plans are in the works for the celebration of local Civil War history, including re-enactors camping throughout Starkville, antebellum home tours, cemetery tours and book lectures and signing by Civil War authorities.

Other activities will include tours of the Grant Collection at MSU and Starkville's Civil War Arsenal. Plans are also in the works for public displays for Stephen D. Lee and Civil War artifacts.

Lindley said this event is based loosely on a recent event at Champion Hill, including author's tents and speakers.

The committee is also planning to create a self-guided Civil War tour of Starkville available for visitors. They are also in the process of creating a website detailing Starkville's Civil War history and plans for the Commemorative event that will be linked to the state of Mississippi's Civil War Sesquicentennial website.

Committee members are hoping the presentation will be as historically accurate as possible, while tying together three key Civil War figures with Starkville connections.

"We want to take a very balanced approach in this presentation," said Starkville Mayor Parker Wiseman. "We want to be very careful to preserve history, not just Confederate history."

Duffy Neubauer, local historian and Civil War re-enactor, said at many events, having both Confederate and Union soldiers tends to diffuse some of the tension that continues to exist in historical presentations.

"It took both sides to make this war," said Mike Ballard, MSU professor, Civil War historian and published author of "The Civil War in Mississippi."

Starkville is just one of many communities throughout Mississippi, and the nation, making plans to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

For more information about this and other events planned throughout the state of Mississippi, go to <http://www.msccivilwar150.com>.