



Press Release

For Immediate Release, March 2, 2005

For More information contact (434) 832-0162 or civilwar@historicsandusky.org

New Virginia Civil War Trail to open in June, 2005

A new Virginia Civil War Trail highlighting the 1864 Virginia Raid of Union General David Hunter will open on the 141st Anniversary of the raid. In June, 1864 General U.S. Grant ordered Gen. David Hunter and his Army of West Virginia to proceed to Lynchburg, Virginia with the goal of capturing this important Confederate supply and transportation center and hasten the end of the war.

Virginia Civil War Trails is a highly successful marker and travel program with approximately 400 markers placed at key Civil War locations throughout the state of Virginia. Recently the states of North Carolina and Maryland have begun their own Civil War Trails program based upon the Virginia model.

Hunter's Raid began with the Battle of Piedmont on June 5, 1864, then proceed to Staunton, Virginia where numerous government buildings and supplies were burned. Hunter then occupied Lexington and burned the Virginia Military Institute and Washington College. He proceeded to Natural Bridge to Buchanan, through the Peaks of Otter, to Bedford, to New London. Along the route Hunter burned numerous private residences including that of Ex-Governor John Letcher. Skirmishing took place as General's John Imboden and John McCausland and a small force of Confederate cavalry harassed Hunter's advance. The raid culminated at the Battle of Lynchburg on June 17-18, 1864 where the Union forces were defeated by Confederate General Jubal Early, then in command of Robert E. Lee's 2nd Corps, detached from the lines of Petersburg and sent to meet the threat of Hunter. Following the Union defeat, Confederates forces pursued Union forces back through Bedford, then to Salem where they fought again at the Battle of Hanging Rock.

"The route of Hunter's Raid in 1864 was witness to some of the most poignant and horrific scenes of the war" said Mitch Bowman, Executive Director of Virginia Civil War Trails. "This route also contains some of the most beautiful and scenic Virginia countryside to be found" he added. "The new Hunter's Raid Civil War Trail will be dynamic blend of Civil War history and Virginia landscapes."

A regional coalition was formed to bring the trail to completion. The Lynchburg Civil War Museum together with Virginia Civil War Trails, along with tourism representatives from the Lynchburg Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Botetourt County Tourism Office, the Bedford City and County Office of Tourism, Staunton Convention and Visitors Bureau, The VMI Museum, Bedford Main Street Inc., The Blue Ridge Parkway, The National Park Service, Natural Bridge of Virginia, and the Lexington/Rockbridge County Tourism Office comprise the partnership.

The Civil War Driving tour will connect the Virginia localities which experienced action from Hunter's Raid. The journey features some of the most beautiful scenic landscapes of Virginia countryside along the Blue Ridge Parkway. "The beauty of it is that a visitor traveling the Hunter's Raid Trail can make the journey in one day or take up to a week doing it. There are so many historic sites, attractions, and natural scenery along this route that visitors will have a chance to experience the best of what Virginia has to offer the traveler." said Greg Starbuck, Executive Director of the Historic Sandusky Foundation and Chairman of the Hunter's Raid Trail committee.

The Hunter's Raid Civil War Trail will be comprised of 24 Civil War Trails markers along Hunter's Raid route. Seven new markers are being added to sixteen existing markers. A brochure and map will guide visitors along the way to each Civil War marker. There will also be a website listing the route, marker sites, and amenities so visitors can plan their trip and stopovers. An audio recording will be produced which will provide a narrated history as visitors drive along the route of Hunter's Raid.

These resources will enable a visitor to easily and comfortably travel the route and timeline of Hunter's Raid. This will be the first leg of a three part tour which will highlight General Jubal Early's 1864 campaign. The second leg follows Early's route down the Shenandoah Valley northward, and the third leg will follow Early's Maryland campaign with the Battle of Monocacy and Jubal Early's advance on Washington DC which saw him take his army to within the city limits of the District of Columbia.

Several Civil War commemorative events have been scheduled this summer highlighting the history of Hunter's Raid. On June 10-12, 2005 Hunter's Raid at Lexington Civil War Re-enactment will take place in Lexington, Virginia. On June 18-19, 2005 the 2nd Annual Lynchburg Civil War Days will be held in Lynchburg, Virginia, and finally on July 22-24, 2005 Hunter's Retreat: The Battle at Liberty will take place in Bedford, Virginia.

The Grand Opening ceremony of the Hunter's Raid Trail will take place at the Lexington Welcome Center on June 1, 2005 at 11:00 am. For more information contact civilwar@historicsandusky.org or call (757) 832-0162.