



# UNION OR SECESSION

— *Virginians Decide* —



AN EXHIBITION AT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA  
December 6, 2010–October 29, 2011

What were Virginians thinking and discussing as the first Southern states withdrew from the United States following the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860? Why was Virginia's decision critical to America's fate in 1861 and key to the ultimate course and outcome of the sectional crisis? To find out, visit *Union or Secession: Virginians Decide*, open 9 AM–5 PM, Monday–Saturday.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS SCHEDULE

**Monday, December 6**  
**Exhibition Opening**

**Wednesday, December 8** | 11:00–11:45 AM  
**Guided Tour**

Space is limited. Call 804.692.3901 to register.

**Thursday, December 9** | 11:00–11:45 AM  
**Guided Tour**

Space is limited. Call 804.692.3901 to register.

**Tuesday, December 14** | 1:00 PM  
**UNION OR SECESSION OPENING LECTURE**  
**Reaping the Whirlwind:  
Virginians on the Eve of War**

As a part of the opening of the *Union or Secession: Virginians Decide* exhibition, Elizabeth Varon discusses the tumultuous period leading to secession. Varon will put Virginians' views of secession in the context of antebellum debates, with Unionists clinging to images of disunion as inherently chaotic and uncontrollable, while secessionists built the case that only disunion would ensure the state's control over her own destiny.

Elizabeth R. Varon, professor of history at the University of Virginia, is author of the award-winning *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, a Union Agent*

*in the Heart of the Confederacy* (2003). She has received numerous academic awards and honors including appointment to the Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lectureship Program (2006). Program sponsored by Middleburg Trust.

**Wednesday, December 15** | 11:00–11:45 AM  
**Guided Tour**

Space is limited. Call 804.692.3901 to register.

**Thursday, December 16** | Noon–1:00 PM  
**MINING THE TREASURE HOUSE PANEL DISCUSSION**  
**Creating the "Union or Secession" Exhibition**

As a part of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, the Library of Virginia developed a unique exhibition on the commonwealth's path to secession between the autumn of 1860 and the spring of 1861. Members of the exhibition development team will discuss the challenges and successes of constructing an exhibition based on archival collections and other contemporary primary sources to give voice to a variety of perspectives about the crisis of 1861.

**Friday, December 17** | 5:00–7:00 PM  
**Educator Open House & Reception**

Educators are invited to join us for a special review of the *Union or Secession* exhibition,

and to learn about educational resources and scheduling school tours. Registration is required. Please call 804.692.3999 or register online at <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/education/registration.htm>.

**Tuesday, December 21** | 11:00–11:45 AM  
**Guided Tour**

Space is limited. Call 804.692.3901 to register.

**Wednesday, December 22** | 11:00–11:45 AM  
**Guided Tour**

Space is limited. Call 804.692.3901 to register.

**Wednesday, February 16** | Noon–1:00 PM  
**MINING THE TREASURE HOUSE TALK**  
**Bowden the Traitor: A Unionist Family  
in Confederate Williamsburg**

During the secession crisis most Virginians were loyal Unionists, capitulating only when President Lincoln called for state militia volunteers to suppress the insurrection in the Deep South. Don Gunter's talk will show that some remained Unionists even after Virginia seceded. Among these were members of the Bowden family, whose opposition to disunion resulted in great personal sacrifice and placed them on an unlikely path of political activism that stretched from the Civil War to the end of the nineteenth century.

Don Gunter attended Roanoke College and received a master's degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. At the Library of Virginia he was an editor on the Virginia Colonial Records Project and, until his recent retirement, on the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, the library's multivolume reference work on notable Virginians, which includes his biographies of the members of the Bowden family.

**Saturday, April 9** | 10:00 AM–4:00 PM  
**2011 VOORHEES CARTOGRAPHY LECTURE**  
**Jed Hotchkiss and Albert Campbell:  
The Army of Northern Virginia's  
Preeminent Mapmakers**

Map specialist Richard W. Stephenson will present this year's lecture, which begins at 1 PM. After a short intermission, Cassandra Farrell, the Library's map specialist, will present a talk entitled "Highlights from the Library of Virginia's American Civil War Map Collection." A special one-day exhibition of maps relating to the talk will be available from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, as well as behind-the-scenes tours of the Library. The event is free and box lunches will be available for purchase at noon.

Richard W. Stephenson, retired head of the Geography and Map Reading Room at the Library of Congress and specialist in American cartographic history, was co-editor of *Virginia in Maps: Four Centuries of Settlement, Growth, and Development* published by the Library in 2000. His other publications include *Civil War Maps: An Annotated List of Maps and Atlases in the Library of Congress* and *The Cartography of Northern Virginia*.

Cassandra Farrell attended Thomas Nelson Community College and Bryan College and received a master's degree from Old Dominion University. She serves as adjunct instructor of history at Thomas Nelson Community College and was curator of the Library's exhibition *From Williamsburg to Wills's Creek: The Fry-Jefferson Map of Virginia*.

**Saturday, April 16 | 9:00 AM–5:00 PM**  
**Display of the Ordinance of Secession**

The Library of Virginia houses a unique and important document related to Virginia's Civil War history—the Ordinance of Secession. On April 17, 1861, after months of debate, the Virginia Convention of 1861 voted 88 to 55 to repeal Virginia's ratification of the Constitution of the United States, effectively withdrawing from the Union. For final approval, the secession referendum had to be submitted to the electorate for their ratification on May 23. Secessionists carried the day and Virginia was officially out of the Union. Members of the convention, on June 14, signed a specially created parchment text of the Ordinance of Secession. In May 1861, the secretary of the Virginia Convention commissioned a skilled Richmond artisan, William Flegenheimer, to inscribe a ceremonial copy of the Ordinance of Secession on parchment, which was signed by 142 members. Because of its age and fragile condition, this rare piece of Virginia history will be displayed for the public only four times during the run of the exhibition.

**Tuesday, April 19 | Noon–1:00 PM**

**MINING THE TREASURE HOUSE TALK**  
**Civil War 150 Legacy Project: Document Digitization and Access**

A partnership between the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission and the Library of Virginia, the Civil War 150 Project: Document Digitization and Access is a multiyear initiative to locate, digitize, and provide worldwide access to the private documentary heritage of the American Civil War era located throughout Virginia. Utilizing Local Sesquicentennial Committees established by the commission and through a partnership with the Library and a network of statewide connections, the CW 150 Legacy Project offers individuals the opportunity to have their historic letters, diaries, and other collections scanned to preserve their valuable intellectual content. The Library's Renee Savits and Laura Drake Davis are coordinating efforts across the state and will discuss details of the project and the treasures uncovered thus far.

Laura Drake Davis is the Civil War 150 Legacy Project archivist for the Western Region of Virginia, while Renee Savits is the Civil War 150 Legacy Project archivist for the Eastern Region. Both have worked at the Library of Virginia for more than eleven years.

**Thursday, April 28 | Noon–1:00 PM**

**UNION OR SECESSION LECTURE**  
**Researching Your Civil War Ancestor**

William Bynum, reference archivist for the Library of Virginia, will discuss sources and strategies for finding information on Civil War soldiers at the Library of Virginia, including federal records,

private papers, and publications, both printed and electronic.

William B. Bynum is a graduate of Wofford College and the University of Virginia. Before coming to the Library in 2007, he established the local history collection at Isothermal Community College, Spindale, North Carolina, and was reference archivist and acting director at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Montreat, North Carolina. Civil War research has been a hobby of his for many years.

**Thursday, May 5 | Noon–1:00 PM**

**UNION OR SECESSION LECTURE**  
**'Let us show our loyalty to Virginia and the Union': The Secession Crisis and the Birth of West Virginia, 1860–1863**

From the polarizing sectional debates in Richmond to President Lincoln's signing of the statehood bill, this talk by Kevin Barksdale will explore the events surrounding the secession crisis in Virginia and how this tumultuous period led to the creation of the state of West Virginia.

Kevin T. Barksdale is an assistant professor of history at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, whose areas of expertise include Appalachian, Native American, early American, and West Virginia history. He received his Ph.D. from West Virginia University in 2005 and his first book, *The Lost State of Franklin: America's First Secession*, was published in 2009.

**Tuesday, June 28 | 9:00 AM–5:00 PM**

**Display of the Ordinance of Secession**  
*see April 16 description*

**Thursday, September 15 | Noon–1:00 PM**

**UNION OR SECESSION LECTURE**  
**Virginia Divided: The Forgotten First Campaign**

The mountains of Western Virginia were a proving ground for soldiers and statesmen in 1861. It was there that generals George McClellan and Robert E. Lee squared off in the opening campaign of America's Civil War. While armies battled, Virginia Unionists defied the Confederates in Richmond by forging a new state government in Wheeling. Hunter Lesser will discuss the soldiers, civilians, and politicians who shaped this overlooked but compelling chapter of Virginia history.

Hunter Lesser is a consulting archaeologist and historical interpreter. His writings on America's past span topics from ancient Native Americans to Kentucky moonshine stills. A lifelong student of the Civil War, he is the author of *Rebels at the Gate: Lee and McClellan on the Front Line of a Nation Divided* (2004).

**Thursday, September 29 | 10:00 AM–Noon**

**WORKSHOP**  
**Researching Your African American Ancestors: Genealogy to 1870**

African American genealogy prior to the end of the Civil War can be difficult. In this workshop, participants will explore methods of determining whether an individual was enslaved or free, and what types of records will be useful in furthering your search based on this information. Cara Griggs, reference archivist with the Library of Virginia, will lead an exploration of records in

the Library's collections, including cohabitation registers, free negro lists, wills, deeds, bible records, and personal papers, as well as selected federal records that can be accessed through its databases. Space is limited. To register, call 804.371.2126.

Cara Griggs received a B.A. in history from the University of Richmond and an M.A. in social science from the University of Chicago. She is currently pursuing a MSLIS with an archival studies concentration from Drexel University. Previously, she worked in the library and collections departments at the Museum of the Confederacy.

**Tuesday, October 18 | Noon–1:00 PM**

**MINING THE TREASURE HOUSE TALK**  
**'A Perfect Steel-Trap': Resources at the Library of Virginia Documenting John Brown's Raid**

The national debate over the moral and political issues of slavery erupted into bloodshed at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, on October 16, 1859. John Brown's abortive attempt to capture the U.S. Arsenal there, in order to encourage a general slave revolt, continues to evoke emotional reactions from Americans 150 years after the event. Historians consider John Brown's Raid to be a crucial turning point between the public acceptance of the status quo of American slavery and a call to more militant abolition of the institution. Brown's action forced many Americans to make difficult moral and political choices about slavery, human rights, and states' rights. R. Thomas Crew will show how the extensive archival holdings at the Library of Virginia that document John Brown's Raid can provide historians with unique and often overlooked records of the commonwealth's response to this extraordinary national event.

R. Thomas Crew Jr., a senior reference archivist at the Library, holds a B.A. and an M.A. in history from Old Dominion University. He identified and published a topical bibliography annotating the Library's extensive archival holdings documenting John Brown's Raid. The resulting finding aid, *John Brown's Raid: Records and Resources at the Library of Virginia* (1999), offers a thorough guide to records that show how Virginia responded to this dramatic event.

**Tuesday, October 25 | 9:00 AM–5:00 PM**

**Display of the Ordinance of Secession**  
*see April 16 description*

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