



Hampton

CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU

Media Release

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**Complex Story of the City's Civil War Destruction "The Burning of Hampton"
Multimedia Outdoor Experience Presented by The Hampton History Museum
October 5**

Hampton, VA—The Hampton History Museum presents an immersive multimedia and live action outdoor experience depicting the Civil War fire that destroyed the city in "The Burning of Hampton" on Saturday, October 5, at 7:15 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. This is a free event.

The story behind the Civil War's first act of scorched-earth total warfare on the night of August 7, 1861 is complex and often misinterpreted. "The Burning of Hampton has always been told as a story of the Confederates and their fear of the city being used as quarters for Federal troops. We're reframing the narrative to tell the story of the "Contraband," the enslaved people who escaped to Fort Monroe, and how it was the fear of them occupying the town that lead to the burning," says Hampton History Museum executive director Luci Cochran.

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In the earliest weeks of the Civil War, the power structure that had driven the South to rebel vanished in Hampton. With the resistance of three enslaved men, and the "Contraband" policy established by General Benjamin Butler that justified U.S. officials' refusal to return them to slavery, a social and political experiment had begun that foreshadowed the Reconstruction Era and eventually the Civil Rights Movement. Confederate troops under Brig. Gen. John B. Magruder ordered the burning as retaliation for the U.S. Army's "Contraband" doctrine and the prospect of fugitive slaves inhabiting the town. The fire destroyed approximately 400 structures over a square mile of Hampton's urban center.

"We believe it is one of the more important stories of Hampton's history because of its legacy," adds Cochran. "This experience will immerse people in the true story of the destruction of Hampton, the lives affected by the fire, and its far-reaching legacy of freedom and equality. This will be a transformative project in that it restores the full story to our shared understanding of the past."

The audience will gather at the corners of Kings Way and Queens Way in Downtown Hampton. The production will begin with large-scale video displays and live theatrical presentations of the unfolding drama, and the reasons leading the Confederates to burn the city. From there spectators will head up Kings Way engaged by live action vignettes and sound and lighting effects along their journey. Actors portraying Hampton citizens, the enslaved, Old Dominion Dragoon soldiers, as well as prominent historical figures such as Mary Peake, a free black woman and teacher to the free and enslaved, and William Roscoe Davis, community spiritual leader and one of the first Contrabands, bring to light the buildup to the fire and foreshadow the legacy that followed.

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Dramatic narration of military leaders, soldiers, journalists and witnesses, together with expansive video displays augment the character-driven narrative. Presented twice, the production lasts approximately an hour, followed by live music, educational presentations and activities nearby.

Registration and Transportation

The Burning of Hampton is a free event, however registration is highly recommended. For more information and registration visit Hampton.gov/burning.

Production

Project manager, Luci Cochran, Hampton History Museum executive director. Writer and director, Lucinda McDermott. Stage manager Cheryl Ruschau. Staging and technology, Dylan Adams, The Lighting and Sound Company, Richmond, VA. Video producer, Tyler Conta, Metro Productions, Richmond, VA. Research, Beth Austin, registrar and historian, with assistance from Will Pell, museum assistant, Hampton History Museum. Props and costumes, Kris Peters, museum educator, Hampton History Museum, and Tim Smith.

For more information, visit www.hamptonhistorymuseum.org or call the Hampton Visitor Center at 757-727-1102.

Images attached:

1967.1.63, Early photograph of St. John's Episcopal Church in Hampton, Va. taken likely sometime following its burning by the Confederates in 1861. Hampton History Museum collection

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2007.22.6, Burning of the Village of Hampton, VA. By the Rebel Troops Under General Magruder, Midnight, Wednesday, August 7th - From a sketch by our Special Artist Accounting General Butler's Command. Hampton History Museum collection

2009.34.49, Black and white photo of the ruins of Hampton after the 1861 fire. The person posed on the right hand side is the photographer himself. Scattered throughout the foreground and background are the remains of foundations, mainly chimneys. Clearly visible is the river to the right and the surrounding marshlands. Hampton History Museum collection

2009.34.47, Evacuation and Burning of Hampton, VA, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 10, 1861. In the foreground is a man with a gun before the Union flag to the left and directly behind him is the river with boats sailing on it and the burning city on the other side.

Mss5.1.Sn237.1.Vol1_0521, Rearview Ruins of St. John's Church, Hampton, Virginia. Sketch by Union Soldier, Private Robert Sneden. Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

Mss5.1.Sn237.1.Vol1_0528, View of Ruins of Hampton, Virginia. Sketch by Union Soldier, Private Robert Sneden. Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads

metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first arrival of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, harbor tours and cruises, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.

During 2019, Hampton commemorates the 400th anniversary of the first African landing in English North America at Hampton's Old Point Comfort on Fort Monroe National Monument. In addition to honoring the men and women who arrived in 1619, the city will also celebrate the contributions of African Americans have made to our city, state and nation. A commission has planned events across the entire year to recognize and celebrate African American impact, including a three-day long Commemoration event, August 23-25.

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