



Jim Ridolph for The Local

After re-enacting the flag presentation to commemorate the 150th anniversary, the unit moved across the street to pose for photos with the monument that recognizes the Hanover unit.

Tavern Civil War exhibit shares 'stories never told'

By Jim Ridolphi
For The Mechanicsville Local

If walls could talk, the ones at Hanover Tavern would have a long and storied history to tell . . . and now they do.

The Hanover landmark unveiled its new audio tour last week at a special pre-event reception for invited guests.

The new program brings the long history of the tavern alive, and allows visitors to tour at their own pace and trace the numerous events that surrounded the local gathering house. Hand-held devices provide the audio link, but the Tavern

provides the backdrop for many events that parallel the history of Hanover County -- and a young nation.

Reception attendees also got a first look at the Tavern's new Civil War exhibit, "Hanover County, The Impact of the Civil War."

The exhibit features loaned historical items from Hanover citizens and focuses on the personal side of a soldier's life. "We'll leave the battles to the National Park Service," said Tavern executive director David Deal.

Deal and his staff collected about 125 objects for the new display and repre-

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sents Hanover's celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

"This was truly a community effort," Deal said. "All the artifacts that are here on loan were given to us by the community. This is a big deal for the Tavern."

He said the personalized display of clothing and other items highlight "stories that were never told."

The event featured a presentation by the 15th Virginia infantry re-enactors who replicated a scene from the corps' illustrious past.

When the Hanover-based troops were stationed at William and Mary in 1861, a woman used her wedding gown to make a flag presented to the unit. That flag exists today at the Museum of the Confederacy.

Liz Watkins Morris sewed the replica for the special Tavern event.

After completing several flags for Five Forks, Morris said the group contacted her to produce the duplicate.

Asked how many hours it took to complete the project, Morris said, "I stopped counting."



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Hanover Tavern executive director David Deal, at the podium in the photo at left, addresses visitors, flanked by re-enactors from the 15th Virginia Infantry, a Civil War unit that contained many Hanoverians. Above, volunteers explained exhibits featured in the new Civil War exhibit to an appreciative group of visitors at the pre-opening reception.

Following the presentation, visitors got a chance to experience the audio tour first-hand and many focused on the room that contains the new Civil War exhibit.

"I think it was a great turnout," Deal said. "It shows the respect and support people have for the Tavern."

The director said it's another

step in an ongoing process to enhance the Tavern and allow it to reach its full historical potential.

"We needed to present and interpret some history here," Deal said. "We have a great old building that has a great history. We were missing the boat because people would come and go to the play, have dinner,

but then they would wander around the building with only a few placards to look at."

That's all been remedied with the new audio tour.

"Now with the audio tour, you can read and hear the details, and, along with the Civil War exhibit, it gives people a reason to enjoy their history here," Deal said.