



News Release

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BENNETT PLACE STATE HISTORIC SITE'S TRAVELING HISTORY TRUNK IS "READY FOR SCHOOL"

DURHAM (August 31, 2006)—Beginning the 2006-2007 academic year, area elementary schools can make 19th-century history come alive for students by using a "traveling history trunk" available at Bennett Place State Historic Site in Durham. Created by the historic site's staff, this trunk is designed to be a mobile, hands-on learning tool for kids in grades K-6. Typical 19th-century items may be found inside it including period clothing, a crop sample, vintage toys, old letters (reproduction) and even equipment a Civil War soldier would have used. The trunk will also feature a teacher's manual highlighting a number of suggested class activities that mesh with the trunk's contents. Teachers may reserve the trunk by calling or emailing Bennett Place at 919/383-4345 and Bennett@ncmail.net.

The themes of the trunk's contents are life in rural North Carolina in the 1860s as well as that of a Civil War soldier. To gain an understanding of everyday life in the state during this period, students can read copies of old letters, examine the objects included in the trunk or reenact 19th-century activities. Teachers are encouraged to use their imagination to make their time working with the trunk a useful, educational and fun experience for everyone.

Once the home of typical yeoman farmers, the James Bennett (or Bennett) family, Bennett Place became the site of the largest troop surrender of the Civil War. On April 26, 1865, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston and Union Gen. William T. Sherman met at the Bennett family farmhouse to negotiate a peaceful solution to America's most tragic war.

To save his troops from the tragedy of a prolonged war, Johnston actually disobeyed the orders of Confederate Pres. Jefferson Davis to disband the infantry and escape with his mounted troops and instead, accepted Sherman's stark surrender terms. The surrender of Johnston's army ended the fighting in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida, allowing nearly 90,000 battered and weary soldiers to return home.

Two more surrenders soon followed. These surrenders, together with Gen. Robert E. Lee's submission to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, effectively disbanded the Confederate forces. The Bennett Place surrender helped spare North Carolina the level of destruction experienced by neighboring southern states.

Bennett Place is located in West Durham, and can be reached by taking 15-501 North, the Durham Freeway (147), or I-85; follow the brown historic site signs. It is part of the division of N.C. Historic Sites within the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, a state agency dedicated to the promotion and protection of North Carolina's arts, history and culture. For more information, visit www.ncculture.com. For further information on Bennett Place or the "traveling history trunk", call 919/383-4345, email bennett@ncmail.net or visit our website at <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/bennett/bennett.htm>.

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