

Press release of the Stonewall Jackson Foundation and VMI

## **Stonewall Jackson House, VMI May Merge Museums**

Lexington, Virginia, October 5, 2010 - The Stonewall Jackson Foundation and the Virginia Military Institute have announced a proposal to transfer the assets and activities of the Stonewall Jackson House to VMI. Under the plan Stonewall Jackson's house in downtown Lexington, and its collection of historic artifacts, would be administered and managed by the VMI Museum, whose operations include management of the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park.

The proposed transfer is subject to approval by The VMI Board of Visitors and the board of the Stonewall Jackson Foundation, as well as state agencies. If approved, this arrangement could become effective sometime in 2011.

“For more than two years the Stonewall Jackson Foundation board has been engaged in a comprehensive study of the existing and future operations of the Stonewall Jackson House,” said Michael Lynn, the Executive Director of the Stonewall Jackson Foundation. “House museums throughout the country, including the Jackson House, are facing challenges created by the economic downturn and long term changes in consumer interests. Our board concluded that a consolidation of efforts through a transfer of assets to VMI was an opportunity to protect the future of the Stonewall Jackson House and its collections.” Lynn added, “The Jackson House brings to the table important collections, well-maintained facilities, and an operation that is free of debt. One of our greatest assets is our extraordinary group of dedicated volunteers.”

General J. H. Binford Peay, III, VMI's Superintendent, said the VMI's educational mission and its close association with Jackson make the consolidation a sensible move. “This supports our educational mission as a state institution, and it allows us to support the tourism industry in the Shenandoah Valley,” he said. “Joining our museum activities in New Market and at VMI with those of the Stonewall Jackson House offers great opportunities for economic development.”

Peay noted that the histories of VMI and Jackson are intertwined. “Scholars and military experts throughout the world continue to study Jackson and his military career, he said. “The plan we're discussing is clearly the right way to assure that important assets with which to interpret his life, his times, and his legacy are preserved.”

Peay further stated, “We're excited about these prospects. The timing could not be better, as the Commonwealth and VMI prepare to observe the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.”

Over the past two years, in reviewing its operations and its options, the Stonewall Jackson Foundation has obtained advice from numerous organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The foundation also engaged the services of Jordan and Bryan Consulting LLC. The firm's partners, Dan Jordan, President Emeritus of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which owns and operates Monticello, and Dr. Charles Bryan, President Emeritus of the Virginia Historical Society, issued this statement:

“We have been pleased to assist the Stonewall Jackson Foundation in its strategic planning process for the last two years. We have known professionally its director Michael Lynn, and Keith Gibson, director of the VMI Museum operations, for many years. There are few more accomplished executives in the field. Their expertise and professionalism is truly commendable and their operations among the best-managed in America.”

“Combining their operations not only makes economic sense, but will also provide enormous benefits to the Commonwealth, each institution and the communities and historical significance they represent. We commend the leadership at VMI and the Stonewall Jackson Foundation for their foresight, leadership and commitment to preserving and enhancing their contributions to history and tourism in Virginia.”



*Stonewall Jackson House in Lexington. A joint proposal by the Stonewall Jackson Foundation and Virginia Military Institute would transfer ownership and operational responsibility to VMI.*

(end of release)