

Reenactors Portray African-American Roles Living History Comes To Essex Co.

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History once again came to life in Essex County with a presentation given by the Gloucester County-based historical reenactment troupe "Voices of Freedom" on March 7.

"Voices of Freedom" was

launched in 2000 by historians Wesley Wilson and Chauncey Herring. The organization highlights the significant roles of African-American men and women, both slave and free, Union and Confederate, in the Civil War.

These histories have been

largely unexplored and underrepresented in educational examinations of the period Wilson said.

Wilson portrayed Thomas Morris Chester, the first African-American journalist hired by a major American daily newspaper. Chester served as

a Civil War correspondent for the *Philadelphia Press*, covering battles throughout Virginia.

Wilson and Herring presented an imagined interview between Chester and James Daniel Gardner, a Gloucester native who served in the United States Colored Troops and one of fourteen African-Americans who received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their courageous actions during a September, 1864 battle at New Market Heights in Henrico County.

More information about that battle and the African-American troops who have been largely ignored by history was presented in a short film entitled "The Forgotten Fourteen" produced by the National Park Service.

Joining Wilson and Herring in the production were Walter Darden, who portrayed Frederick Douglass and gave highlights and stories from the famous abolitionist's life, and Sandra Cherry, who nearly stole the show with her rous-

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Chauncey Herring (l) portrayed Thomas Morris Chester, a Civil War correspondent for the *Philadelphia Press*, and Wesley Wilson was Medal of Honor recipient James Daniel Gardner, during a presentation at Angel Visit Baptist Church on March 7. The traveling historical troupe "Voices of Freedom" works to portray the significant roles African-Americans played in the Civil War.

Living History Program Comes To Essex County

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ing portrayal of Harriett Tubman.

The program, held at the Angel Visit Baptist Church and sponsored by the Middle Peninsula African-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Virginia, the Essex County Museum and Historical Society, and the Essex

County Sesquicentennial Committee, was the second in a series of three historical events planned for Essex County during what has been recognized as a "fortnight of living history" in Essex County by the county board of supervisors.

For more information about "Voices of Freedom" visit their website at www.voicesof.freedom.info.



Reenactors Recognized

Tappahannock Mayor Roy M. Gladding (r) presented Walter Darden and Sandra Cherry, members of the "Voices of Freedom" historical reenactment troupe, with a key to the city during a reception held at the Essex Inn on March 6. The following day, the four member ensemble gave a presentation which highlighted the significant contributions of African-Americans in the Civil War. Bessida Cauthorne White (l) represented the Middle Peninsula African-American Genealogical and Historical Society, which sponsored the event.