

# HAMPTON VA

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Fred Gaskins | fgaskins@hampton.gov | 757-727-6191  
22 Lincoln Street | Hampton, VA 23669

## **Cobb retires as Hampton History Museum curator after nearly 31 years with the city**

**Feb. 27, 2015** – Hampton History Museum Curator J. Michael Cobb, whose nearly 31-year tenure with the city included important contributions to the creation of the Virginia Air & Space Center and the history museum, retired this week.

Cobb will continue to be involved with the Hampton History Museum as a consultant.

“Mike has been protector and storyteller of the city’s past, and nobody knows the ins and outs, who’s who and dramatic tales of Hampton’s history as he does,” said Luci Cochran, executive director of the museum. “He’s created a place that explores over 400 years of the city’s past, and that has placed Hampton history in the larger context of America’s story,” Cochran said.

As founding curator, Cobb worked with the Hampton History Museum Association on the creation of the museum, which opened in 2003. He sought opportunities to strengthen the museum’s collection, creating archaeology and photographic collections recognized throughout the state. He also catalogued the museum’s collection and updated, initiated and implemented professional practices and archival and curatorial techniques. Cobb incorporated selected artifacts, images and manuscripts from the collection to create the Hampton History Galleries that form the heart of the museum.

In addition to Hampton History Galleries, Cobb mounted numerous temporary exhibitions at the museum and elsewhere. He has led six major archaeological excavations that recovered more than 300,000 artifacts. Most recently, Cobb oversaw excavation of the site of the Grand Contraband Camp near downtown Hampton.

Cobb was appointed by the city manager to serve the original committee that developed the overall concept of the Virginia Air and Space Center and Hampton Roads Regional History Center from 1985 to 1992, including “From the Sea to the Stars,” Imax theatre, staffing, fundraising, management and operating procedures. He assisted with the selection of exhibit designers and made significant contributions to the aeronautical and regional history exhibits. He was responsible for the Hampton Roads History Center, a \$1 million, 13,000 square foot exhibit that was housed within the Air and Space Center until 2001.

He initiated development of Historic Fort Wool as a tourist attraction and he collaborated with Hampton's Parks and Recreation Department to renovate and open this long-abandoned site.

Earlier in his career, Cobb served at the Syms-Eaton Museum and Hampton Historical Collection, where he oversaw artifacts, manuscripts, and photographs relating to Hampton's history and instituted the first professional organization and storage of the collection.

He authored "Fort Wool: Star Spangled Banner Rising," was one of three writers who penned "Battle of Big Bethel – Crucial Clash in the Early Civil War," and wrote several published articles about the Civil War. He is a recipient of the Jefferson Davis award from the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

For more information, contact Cochran at 757-727-1610.

###