Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem State University and Old Salem in conjunction with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources are joining together to host “Lay My Burden Down,” a conference for experts and non-experts alike that will explore issues of freedom as part of the North Carolina’s commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

“This conference brings together several of the most renowned historians who have written about slavery and emancipation,” said conference organizer, civil war expert and Wake Forest University Reynolds Professor of History Paul D. Escott. “We are extremely fortunate to have both celebrated senior scholars, such as Ira Berlin and Thavolia Glymph, and outstanding younger historians such as Heather Williams, Susan O’Donovan and David Cecelski. They will share new information and perspectives to this critical period in our nation’s history.”
When and Where:

Thursday, Oct. 17 at Old Salem and Winston-Salem State, and

Friday, Oct. 18 at Wake Forest University.

Highlights:

After a welcome by Cheryl Harry, director of African-American programs at Old Salem Museums & Gardens and Wake Forest history professor Anthony Parent on Thursday, Oct. 17 at 12:15 in the James A. Gray Auditorium in Old Salem, tours of St. Philips Heritage Center will be held starting at 1 p.m. for conference attendees. St. Philips is the oldest standing African-American church in North Carolina.

Maya Angelou, Reynolds Professor of American Studies, poet, author and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011 will present a Poem for the Occasion on Friday, Oct. 18 in Brendle Recital Hall at 1:15 p.m.

Three Wake Forest senior history majors are presenting at the conference. Hutton Baird from Signal Mountain, Tenn., will be showcasing Berea College’s commitment to educating both races before and after the Civil War. “The past is part of the present,” said Baird. “As a future teacher, it’s critical to keep moving forward by sharing the truths of freedom and equality with young people.” Baird is available for interviews.

A complete schedule of events is on the “Lay My Burden Down” website.

Cost: Registration is $20 ($10 for students) and covers all lectures, refreshments and a boxed lunch on Friday.
Background:
On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring “all persons held as slaves” within the states in rebellion “are, and henceforward, shall be free.” From that point on, every advance of Union troops expanded the domain of freedom. At the same time, enslaved persons before and during the war took actions that directly impacted their liberty, escaping from their captors or, in some cases, simply walking away. Freedom and its ramifications shed light on the war and on modern American history.

More information is also available at the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

About Wake Forest University:
Wake Forest University combines the best traditions of a small liberal arts college with the resources of a large research university. Founded in 1834, the school is located in Winston-Salem, N.C. The University’s graduate school of arts and sciences, divinity school, and nationally ranked schools of law, medicine and business enrich our intellectual environment. Learn more about Wake Forest University at www.wfu.edu.

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