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Gettysburg Cyclorama Painting to Reopen to the Public September 26

Return of the Massive Painting for the Grand Opening of the Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park Enriches the New Visitor Experience

GETTYSBURG, Pa. August 20, 2008 – The Gettysburg Foundation and the National Park Service will welcome visitors — for the first time in more than a century — to a complete “Battle of Gettysburg” Cyclorama experience, beginning September 26 at the new Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park. A three-day Grand Opening weekend not only celebrates the completion of the Cyclorama painting, but also brings together a variety of three-dimensional, interactive and hands-on experiences that immerse visitors in the story of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Civil War.

A ceremonial ribbon cutting on September 26 will mark the official opening of the facility. Nineteenth-century music, a vignette from a Broadway play, a children’s choir and a reading of the Gettysburg Address are included on the program. And from September 26-28, one of the five known manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address will be on display at the new Museum and Visitor Center. On loan from The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill., this manuscript was given by Lincoln to orator Edward Everett, who preceded him on the speaker’s podium in Gettysburg November 19, 1863.

The opening of the Cyclorama Gallery marks the completion of the 139,000 square foot, \$103 million Museum and Visitor Center. Although portions of the facility opened to the public in mid-April, the five-year effort to return the massive Cyclorama painting to its original glory is just now coming to an end. Its new home is a gallery that, for the first time, provides the proper conditions for both its presentation and its preservation for future generations.

“While most of our Museum and Visitor Center offers a 21st-century museum experience, the new Cyclorama painting experience presents a unique opportunity: the opportunity to view the 1863 battle in the same context that battle veterans did when they first saw the painting toward

the end of the 19th century,” said Robert C. Wilburn, president and CEO of the Gettysburg Foundation.

At 377 feet by 42 feet, the Gettysburg Cyclorama is the largest painting in the U.S. The colossal circular oil painting, created in 1883-1884 by French master Paul Philippoteaux and a team of 20 artists, serves as a vivid monument to soldiers on both sides who took part in the Battle of Gettysburg. To give viewers the illusion that they are standing in the middle of Pickett’s charge, the painting was designed to include a three-dimensional diorama and a sky that disappears into an overhead canopy. Those features, lost for more than a century, have been recreated and are once again a part of the Gettysburg Cyclorama experience. When it was first displayed, the impact was said to be so overwhelming that grown men wept.

“The ‘Battle of Gettysburg’ Cyclorama was never intended to stand on its own — as a painting or as a snapshot of the battle’s landmarks,” said David L. Olin of Olin Conservation, Inc., Great Falls, Va., who directed the team that has brought the painting back to life. “It was to be an experience — to be wholly absorbed and felt. It was to inspire awe and amazement. Now, for the first time in more than a century, the viewer will once again enter a realm in which their senses will, if just for a moment, place them in the midst of the battle.”

The new Gettysburg Cyclorama painting experience also includes a sound and light program. Exhibits in the Cyclorama Gallery’s mezzanine level will detail the history of the painting and its conservation. Tickets to the Cyclorama painting experience include the film, *A New Birth of Freedom*. Narrated by Morgan Freeman and featuring the voices of Sam Waterston and Marcia Gay Harden, the film tells the story of the Battle of Gettysburg and the war that changed the nation.

The Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park — located on land that saw no major battle action — preserves and presents the story of the Battle of Gettysburg, in the context of the Civil War, its causes and consequences. It also preserves for future generations the National Park Service’s priceless collection of objects, artifacts and archival materials. In addition to the Gettysburg Museum of the American Civil War, with its 12 exhibit galleries and interactive and multi-media stations, the facility also includes a resource room, a Refreshment Saloon and Museum Bookstore. The Ford Motor Company Fund Education Center provides both indoor and outdoor classroom space for the hundreds of thousands of students who visit each year. A curatorial center, library and reading room house resources available, by appointment, to scholars, researchers and the public.

Gettysburg National Military Park preserves the Gettysburg Battlefield, site of the largest battle ever fought in North America and a decisive battle in the American Civil War. Visitors are encouraged to tour the 6,000-acre Battlefield, which is undergoing a multi-year, multimillion-dollar rehabilitation to restore its historic integrity and create a sustainable environment by improving wetlands, water quality and wildlife habitat. It was at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery adjacent to the Battlefield that Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863.

This new Gettysburg experience inspires visitors to learn more about the battle’s significance in American history, and to draw connections between the events that occurred here and what is happening in their lives today. On February 12, 2009 — the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth — that experience will be enhanced further with the opening of the David Wills House in downtown Gettysburg. Restored by the National Park Service to its 1863 appearance,

the David Wills House was not just the center of Gettysburg -- it was the center of the immense clean-up process after the Battle of Gettysburg and the place where President Lincoln put the finishing touches on the Gettysburg Address. The new six-gallery museum will interpret Gettysburg's efforts to recover from the battle, and its transformation into a symbol of the nation's "new birth" of freedom.

The Gettysburg Foundation, www.gettysburgfoundation.org, is a private, nonprofit educational organization working in partnership with the National Park Service to enhance preservation and understanding of the heritage and lasting significance of Gettysburg.

Gettysburg National Military Park, www.nps.gov/gett, is a unit of the National Park Service that preserves and protects the resources associated with the Battle of Gettysburg and the Soldiers' National Cemetery, and provides an understanding of the events that occurred there within the context of American history.

Visitor Information for the New Museum and Visitor Center

Gettysburg, "Our Country's Common Ground," is located in south central Pennsylvania, about nine miles north of the Maryland state line. It is about 55 miles from Baltimore, Md., and Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, and about 85 miles from Washington, D.C., Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

The Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park is open daily — except Thanksgiving Day, December 25 and January 1. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. in winter, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. in spring and fall, and 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. in summer.

Admission to the Gettysburg Cyclorama painting and related exhibits also includes admission to the film, *A New Birth of Freedom*. Tickets will be \$12 for adults (ages 13 and up), \$7 for youth (ages 6-12) and free for children (ages 5 and under).

For more information, call 866-889-1243 or visit www.gettysburgfoundation.org or www.nps.gov/gett. For the first time, visitors can also purchase tickets and book tours online at www.gettysburgfoundation.org.

Note to Media: Photography, available electronically, and b-roll may be obtained by contacting Hillary Dunn at Hillary.Dunn@edelman.com, 312-233-1329 or Lisa Hadesman at Lisa.Hadesman@edelman.com, 312-552-1165.

Media may schedule a preview of the Gettysburg Cyclorama painting and the Museum on September 4, 9, 10 or 24, 25, by contacting Lisa Hadesman at lisa.hadesman@edelman.com, 312-552-1165.