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The Gettysburg Address Will Return to Gettysburg for Museum and Visitor Center Grand Opening

**Three-Day Celebration Also Will Feature the Return to
Public View of the Gettysburg Cyclorama Painting**

Gettysburg, PA (August 20, 2008)— One of only five known manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address will be on display in the Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park as part of the three-day Grand Opening celebration September 26-28.

Gettysburg Foundation President Robert C. Wilburn announced today that the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill., has agreed to loan its copy of the Gettysburg Address to the Gettysburg Foundation for display during those three days, which also marks the opening of the new Cyclorama Gallery that houses the conserved Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, now complete with skyline, canopy and three-dimensional diorama.

Known as the Everett copy, the manuscript that will travel to Gettysburg was given by Lincoln to Edward Everett, the orator whose two-hour speech preceded his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863. It is the third of the five known manuscripts, and the first to include the words “under God” in the final sentence that calls for “a new birth of freedom.” Everett asked Lincoln for a copy to include in a volume he was assembling to mark the November 19 dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. He also included in that volume his own two-hour oration, other speeches given that day, maps of Gettysburg and accounts of the day. He wanted to auction it, with the proceeds going to support health care for Civil War soldiers.

“We are exceedingly grateful to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum for making it possible for us to display this rare document that continues to resonate throughout the world, and especially here in Gettysburg,” Wilburn said. “One hundred and forty-five years after its delivery, I believe the Gettysburg Address is still the best summation in our nation's history of the meaning and price of freedom.”

The manuscript of the Address, along with the rest of the volume that Everett assembled, will be on display in the Gilder Lehrman Institute Special Exhibits Gallery during the museum’s regular hours of operation, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., beginning Friday, September 26 through Sunday, September 28.

The Grand Opening also marks the debut of the massive Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, following a five-year conservation campaign that has not only halted deterioration of the country’s only National Historic Object, but also resulted in the recreation of 12 feet of sky and other lost canvas, a three-dimensional diorama and canopy. These features, which have been lost for more than a century, will once again enable viewers to feel as if they are standing in the midst of Pickett’s Charge, just as viewers would have 124 years ago. It is one of only two Cyclorama paintings on display in the U.S., and the largest painting in the country. A new sound and light program helps bring the painting to life.

In addition to the debut of the conserved Gettysburg Cyclorama painting and display of the Gettysburg Address, the Museum and Visitor Center at Gettysburg National Military Park plans a number of special events and programs throughout the three days. The public is invited to the ceremonial ribbon cutting, at 11 a.m. Friday, September 26. The program will include 19th-century music, a vignette from a Broadway play featuring actor Stephen Lang, a children’s choir and a reading of the Gettysburg Address.

The public also is invited to purchase tickets to a “Party Like It’s 1863 Gala Celebration” from 7 p.m. to midnight on Saturday, September 27. Additional information is available on the Foundation’s Web site at www.gettysburgfoundation.org. Tickets can be purchased online or at the door.

The Gettysburg Foundation 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 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.