

The Civil War at 150

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During the third weekend of May the bark of musket guns and the thundering of the Napoleon 12-pounder cannon will once again reverberate in Carlisle as Union and Confederate Soldiers, meet on the battlefield. They will meet at the Army Heritage and Education Center as part of the Army Heritage Days on May 21 and 22, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the start of the deadliest conflict in U.S. history, a conflict that saw 620,000 military casualties. Ten percent of all Union Soldiers between the age of 20 and 45 and 30 percent of Confederate Soldiers between the ages 18 and 40, died.



To commemorate this event, the Army Heritage and Education Center, along with the Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau, will be “leading the

charge” in kicking-off events and activities that commemorate Pennsylvania’s role in the Civil War.

The first event commemorating the “War Between the States,” will be an exhibit at the USAHEC Visitor and Education center entitled, “**A Great Civil War, 1861: The Union Dissolved,**” that will open on May 14. This exhibit will be the first in a series of four exhibits covering the full spectrum of the U.S. Civil War over the next five years.





Display cases that will soon hold Civil War artifacts are moved into position in Ridgeway Hall at the Visitor and Education Center at the Army Heritage and Education Center. Photo by Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos.

The exhibit will include displays on not just the infantry and artillery, but also on the newly formed signal corps, where Civil War Soldiers used the art of “wig-wagging” or semaphore to relay messages. There will also be a field surgical tent complete with flies, as well as displays of general camp scenes.

The Army Heritage Days will also feature the:

- **Pennsylvania Civil War Road Show** -The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in association with the Pennsylvania Civil War 150 Committee created a traveling exhibit that conveys the story of Pennsylvania's role in the Civil War. The exhibit is contained in an expandable 44-foot tractor-trailer and will be set up on the USAHEC grounds during the weekend. Visitors to the exhibit will have the opportunity to learn more about Civil War Soldier's stories and the impact of the war on the lives of Pennsylvanians.
- A photograph exhibit entitled, “**Understanding war through imagery: The Civil War in American memory.**” **This exhibit will be the focal point of a conference that will be held on June 25 and 26.**
- **Union and Confederate Artillery** -Re-enactors portraying Union and Confederate Soldiers will operate several cannons over the course of the weekend. Several of the pieces on display will be original to the period, with one Confederate piece dating to 1861.

The Army Heritage Day’s events will feature more than just the Civil War. Several hundred re-enactors covering all periods of Army history will occupy the Army Heritage Trail over the weekend, turning the static displays into living interactions with history.

Events include:

- **Army Equipment** -JLG from McConnellsburg, PA and BAE Systems, from York, PA, will provide large equipment currently used by the United States Army. This year's vehicles will include a M109A6 Paladin (self-propelled howitzer), a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) armored fighting vehicle and an Atlas, fork lift-type vehicle.
- **"Swing Into Victory"** - a three-part educational/entertainment program sponsored by the Army Heritage Center Foundation, the USAHEC, the Cumberland County Historical Society and

Allenberry Playhouse, through a tourism grant from the Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau. The program is a getaway weekend package of WWII era entertainment and lectures on historical topics that includes a performance of the band "Swing Fever" and period dancers at the USAHEC's new Visitor and Education Center on Saturday afternoon.

Another aspect of the exhibits that will be featured at the Army Heritage Days is that the display areas are both environmentally friendly and they protect the artifact.

“The display cases are all fitted with an inferred sensor that will turn the lights on or off, depending on whether people are nearby,” said John Leighow, the director of the Army Heritage Museum.

One of the most important things for any museum is preserving their artifacts. “If the relative humidity gets above 65 or 70 percent mold starts to grow, and once you get mold you have a big problem. If the humidity gets below 45 percent or so, wood can start cracking. So it is important that the artifacts remain in a controlled environment,” said Leighow. To protect the Civil War artifacts AHEC uses desiccant or silicon jell packets in the bottom of their display cases to keep the humidity at a constant.

Of course the other reason the exhibits are largely kept in display cases is so people don't touch them. “I don't care how well trained you are, people can't resist touching things,” said Leighow.

To find out more email CARL_AHEC-VES@conus.army.mil or call 717-245-3641.

For update on these and other USAHEC events visit their website at:

<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/index.cfm>.

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