



Pennsylvania Historical  
& Museum Commission

## News for Immediate Release

**April 4, 2013**

### **New Civil War Exhibit Opens in Time for Gettysburg's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The State Museum of Pennsylvania's New Gallery to Open April 19.

**Harrisburg** – An exciting new exhibit honoring Pennsylvania's role in the Civil War will soon be open at The State Museum of Pennsylvania.

"Objects of Valor: Commemorating the Civil War in Pennsylvania," opens Friday, April 19, with a free reception from 7 to 9 p.m. The reception is sponsored in part by the Friends of the State Museum and in conjunction with Harrisburg's 3rd in the Burg, a monthly celebration of arts and entertainment.

Featuring artifacts from the museum's permanent collections, the centerpiece of the exhibit is Peter F. Rothermel's epic narrative painting "Battle of Gettysburg: Pickett's Charge." The painting depicts the Union's successful defense of General George Pickett's charge on the third day of the battle.

Rothermel, a native of Nescopeck, Luzerne County, painted the enormous artwork in 1870. It is regarded as the largest Civil War battle scene ever painted on a single canvas. It has been exhibited at the museum since 1965.

The exhibit is inspired by the original setting in which "Battle of Gettysburg" and its related paintings were once displayed. New interpretive panels, casework and interactive components, give visitors the story behind the painting, including its original commission by the state legislature in 1865.

The exhibit tells of the painstaking research conducted by Rothermel and its much anticipated unveiling at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in 1870. Visitors get a glimpse of its critical and popular acclaim as it traveled across the country—and abroad—during the late 19th century.

The painting's 20<sup>th</sup> century story is also told, including its relocation to the then newly opened William Penn Memorial Museum in 1965, and subsequent conservation in the late 1980s.

The gallery also offers visitors an opportunity to see some Civil War objects not seen in decades. They include:

- A chair from General George Gordon Meade's Gettysburg headquarters
- The musket used by 69-year-old civilian John L. Burns who joined Union forces to defend the North
- Battlefield shot and shell

Artifacts donated during the past 100 years by veterans and their families will be on display. They include sashes, swords and paintings of famous Civil War generals to ordinary, everyday items saved by common soldiers to memorialize their experience in the war.

The gallery will feature more recent acquisitions such as objects associated with the United States Colored Troops (USCT). The museum's outstanding collection of Civil War presentation swords, one of the best of its kind in the country, can be seen in a custom designed case.

The State Museum of Pennsylvania, adjacent to the State Capitol in Harrisburg, is one of 25 historic sites and museums administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as part of the Pennsylvania Trails of History®. The State Museum offers expansive collections interpreting Pennsylvania's fascinating heritage.

With exhibits examining the dawn of geologic time, the Native American experience, the colonial and revolutionary era, a pivotal Civil War battleground, and the commonwealth's vast industrial age, The State Museum demonstrates that Pennsylvania's story is America's story.

Museum hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for children and senior citizens.

For more information about the museum, visit [www.statemuseumpa.org](http://www.statemuseumpa.org).

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**Editor's Note:** The State Museum will offer press previews of "Objects of Valor: Commemorating the Civil War in Pennsylvania" on Monday, April 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please call 717-705-8639 to arrange a time.