



Gettysburg, resilient then and now

On April 12, 1861 Confederate troops under the command of General Pierre Beauregard opened fire at 4:30am on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. These were the first shots that started the American Civil War, also known as “The War Between The States”. That fateful April day unknowingly brought a little town called Gettysburg into the nation’s eyes for 3 long days in July 1863.

Growing up and working in this town, my first job was at the Gettysburg Travel Council when it was located in the train station on Carlisle St. The number one question asked when a tourist arrived was “where’s the battlefield”. I thought to myself, well, you’re kind of standing on it. I’d get them their town map, a list of all the museums and their hours and fees and then send them on their way to the Visitor Center on the Taneytown Rd. The first suggestion I had for them was to see the Electric Map (I’m really making myself sound pretty old) and second was to walk across the parking lot to the Cyclorama to see the historic painting of Picket’s Charge.

So many things have changed since then. The Gettysburg Travel Council is now Destination Gettysburg and located just outside of town. The Visitor Center on Taneytown Rd. is no more and the current location is on part of the grounds of the old Fantasyland Park (okay, I’m officially ancient). The Electric Map is no more and the Cyclorama building is gone and the painting is now housed in the Visitor Center.

What hasn’t changed is this town’s vibrancy and innovative ways to make itself relevant to a new generation of Civil War enthusiasts. Steinwehr Ave was the street to be on Friday and Saturday nights. Shops were open late, people were out walking way past dark and the locals were cruising the street and making the “Hardee’s to the Square” loop.

So what is happening on Steinwehr now? Well, there’s no more Hardee’s. The Gettysburg Wax Museum is now the Gettysburg Heritage Center. Gone are the life size wax figures depicting scenes and prominent figures during the battle and the war. Now there is a more interactive experience at the museum focusing on the civilians who lived in the town and the soldiers on the battlefield. You get to hear the stories of those who called Gettysburg their home.

Shopping and dining on Steinwehr is plentiful. GARMA dining members on Steinwehr are Gettysburg Eddies, Hunt’s Battlefield Fries, Appalachian Brewing Company, Tommy’s Pizza and the historic Dobbin House built by Rev. Alexander Dobbin in 1776. GARMA shopping members are Rosie’s Collection, Regimental Quartermaster and just on the corner, still considered Baltimore St., Body and Soul Silversmith. Both the Gettysburg Heritage Center and Dobbin House have wonderful gift shops, too.

This little ‘burg, founded and named for settler James Getty, has evolved and thrived into the Gettysburg we see today in 2021. Gettysburg was resilient after the battle and it’s shown resiliency in the wake of the battle we’ve faced since March 2020; a national pandemic.

History, heritage and beautiful memories of Gettysburg. So many reasons to love our town. For a complete list of GARMA members visit www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com.

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