



11-23-2015

The Grand Parade: Remembering the American Civil War

Elizabeth A. Smith
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler>



Part of the [Public History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Smith, Elizabeth A., "The Grand Parade: Remembering the American Civil War" (2015). *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*. 138.

<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/138>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/138>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

The Grand Parade: Remembering the American Civil War

Abstract

On November 21, a small contingent from the 26th PEMR or PCG—Gettysburg College’s reenacting group—gathered early in the morning in Union uniform and civilian dress outside of the Appleford Inn. With a flowered wreath in hand, the small group made their way down Chambersburg Street. There, in sight of the Dollar General and the Segway Tour office, they laid the wreath at the base of the monument, which features a young college boy, musket in hand, as he marches off to battle. The group of students read the history of the unit and had their pictures taken, an annual tradition that has become a prominent memory in the minds of the student reenactors [*excerpt*].

Keywords

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, Remembrance Day Parade

Disciplines

History | Public History | United States History

Comments

This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

The Grand Parade: Remembering the American Civil War

November 23, 2015

By Elizabeth Smith '17

On November 21, a small contingent from the 26th PEMR or PCG—Gettysburg College's reenacting group—gathered early in the morning in Union uniform and civilian dress outside of the Appleford Inn. With a flowered wreath in hand, the small group made their way down Chambersburg Street. There, in sight of the Dollar General and the Segway Tour office, they laid the wreath at the base of the monument, which features a young college boy, musket in hand, as he marches off to battle. The group of students read the history of the unit and had their pictures taken, an annual tradition that has become a prominent memory in the minds of the student reenactors.



The monument to the 26th Pennsylvania Emergency Militia Regiment. Photography by the author.

For many, Civil War reenacting serves as a way to remember the Civil War. With reenactments ranging from large scale events like Gettysburg to small town living histories, thousands of men and women from all around the country—indeed, from all around the globe—choose to wear wool uniforms and day dresses and reenact this period of history. Reenacting, though controversial as a medium of public history, serves as a way for many people of all different

ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds to remember the American Civil War and the soldiers who served.

Every year, Gettysburg hosts the annual Remembrance Day Parade where hundreds of spectators gather to watch the procession as reenactors march through the streets of Gettysburg beginning on Lefever Street and concluding at the end of Steinwehr Avenue. Typically bundled up against the November cold, people watch as the Union and Confederate reenactors march by with flags unfurled and drums and fifes filling the air.

Why do we do this year after year? It seems odd to dress up in clothing that went outdated over a hundred years ago and parade around town, but for the reenactors who participate it isn't odd at all. As a reenactor for seven years, I myself have marched several times in Remembrance Day parades. But why do we do it? Surely there are better ways to remember the soldiers who fought, suffered, and died during the years of 1861-1865 than to dress up like Union and Confederate soldiers and march in a parade.

Every year, millions of people visit battlefields like Gettysburg for a variety of reasons. For some, it is an annual pilgrimage to visit the ground where their ancestors fought and died. For others, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit one of the turning points of the Civil War. And still for others a trip to Gettysburg serves as a way to remember those who came before, who fought on the very ground they now stand on, and to honor the soldiers who fought.

Regardless of how we choose to remember the soldiers of the American Civil War—whether it be by marching in a parade, laying a wreath at their monument, or visiting the ground they fought on—all that matters is that we do remember them. President Lincoln once said that “The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.” These words ring true today as we look back, reflect, and remember all those men and women who enlisted, who fought, who suffered, and who died in the American Civil War.

<http://gettysburgcompiler.com/2015/11/23/the-grand-parade-remembering-the-american-civil-war/#respond>