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## Gettysburg College Campus Purchased by Preservation Society

Kevin P. Lavery  
*Gettysburg College*

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# Gettysburg College Campus Purchased by Preservation Society

## **Abstract**

The articles are satirical pieces meant to imagine the danger of a paradigm of preservation lacking in strategy and judgment. Preservation is a wonderful cause, but like any cause it must be approached with purposeful intent and not simply for its own sake. It is an excellent tool of meaningful historical engagement when done properly; when mishandled, it can do the surrounding region harm without accomplishing anything of value [*excerpt*].

## **Keywords**

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, preservation society

## **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

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### Gettysburg College campus purchased by preservation society

May 8, 2015

By Kevin Lavery '16

*Please click on each of the images below to read articles at full size and resolution.*

*The below articles are satirical pieces meant to imagine the danger of a paradigm of preservation lacking in strategy and judgment. Preservation is a wonderful cause, but like any cause it must be approached with purposeful intent and not simply for its own sake. It is an excellent tool of meaningful historical engagement when done properly; when mishandled, it can do the surrounding region harm without accomplishing anything of value.*

*Photos courtesy of the author and Wikimedia Commons, respectively.*

# THE GETTYSBURG TIMES

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Saturday, May 26, 2035

## Gettysburg College campus purchased by preservation society



**Gettysburg, Pa.** After years of negotiation, the Society of Civil War Preservation has reached an agreement with Gettysburg College to purchase the institution's 200-acre campus in order to restore it to its Civil War Era appearance.

At a press conference Tuesday morning, Stephen Leahy, president of the society, called the deal the single most important accomplishment in preservation since the establishment of Gettysburg National Military Park. For decades, the society has worked in conjunction with the National Park Service to restore as much of Gettysburg to its 1863 state as possible.

"We believe that every acre counts when it comes to preserving our heritage," said Leahy. "We have worked in conjunction with the National Park Service to restore as much of Gettysburg to its 1863 state as possible."

The college campus is certainly an important part of the historic landscape, having been held during the three-day battle first by the Union army and then by Confederate forces. Pennsylvania Hall, which currently serves as the college's main administration building, was used during the battle as a field hospital. The college has expanded considerably since 1863.

"It will be an expensive and time-consuming undertaking to demolish the college's post-war facilities," Leahy conceded. "But we have faith that our generous donors will continue to support our mission to restore Gettysburg to its historic state. We understand that some people have certain attachments to these buildings, but we have to consider what will help visitors best imagine the Gettysburg of 1863. Sentimentalism cannot be allowed to stand in the way of preserving our past."

The first of the buildings scheduled to be removed is McKnight Hall, named after former Gettysburg president and Civil War veteran Harvey McKnight.

In addition to the demolition of post-war buildings, the project will see extensive renovations to remove sections of Pennsylvania Hall which were added after the battle. The SCWP also plans to eventually restore the building's interior to how it appeared during the Civil War.

"We're most excited to be rebuilding Linnaean Hall," Leahy added, referring to a Civil War Era building which was demolished in 1942. "But the price tag won't be cheap."

For its part, the college has been supportive of the SCWP's plans. Although alumni have rallied in defense of the campus they love, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted in favor of the sale last week. Speculation that the college has based its decision on financial insolvency has been fueled by anonymous reports from parties familiar with the college's recent budgetary crisis, a consequence of the growing popularity of online educational services offered by other institutions. Gettysburg College now plans to transition from being a residential liberal arts college

to a digital community of learners.

Regardless of the college's motive for selling its campus and moving its remaining administrative structure to downtown Gettysburg, the outcome is that another 200 acres will be restored to their 1863 state, with some exceptions. At the announcement, a 2015 graduate of the college asked Leahy at what stage of the project the SCWP would pay to have the Mummasburg Road rerouted along its historic orientation.

"We will not be altering any of the campus roads or sidewalks," Leahy responded. "We expect that they will help accommodate visitors to the restored campus."

When asked about several historically important sites on Gettysburg's campus which were erected after the Civil War – including the home of former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower during the First World War, which now houses the Eisenhower Institute – Leahy shrugged and remarked that the Society of Civil War Preservation's mission is only to preserve sites from the Civil War Era. "Unfortunately, we can't preserve every historic location."

The society anticipates protests from the community, but has promised that they are fully committed to the total restoration of the campus regardless of any sentimental outcry.

# THE GETTYSBURG TIMES

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Friday, May 26, 2015

## Preservationists acknowledge mishandling of college campus restoration project



What began as a well-intentioned but poorly planned attempt to restore the campus of Gettysburg College to its historic 1863 state is today only a headache for the group responsible.

On the tenth anniversary of the Society of Civil War Preservation's purchase of the Gettysburg College campus, society president Stephen Leahy announced a hiatus of the campus restoration project, admitting that the project had suffered major strategic failures.

"We plan to pause all restoration projects on the campus for the next year while we reexamine how best to proceed with the project," said Leahy. "We purchased the campus ten years ago out of devotion to our persistent belief in the value of preservation, but we now acknowledge that we underestimated the administrative and fiscal burden we took upon our organization."

Many of the college facilities have been removed since the society purchased the campus, but the process has been haphazard and often halting due to poor budgeting by the preservation society. Although the SCWP promised historic markers to help interpret the campus's Civil War connections for visitors, only a few such signs have been erected.

The project has also been plagued by protests, including from former members of the Gettysburg College community.

"Gettysburg College was a historic site in its own right," one angry protester shouted at Leahy during the question-and-answer session of yesterday's press conference. "And now you've ruined it because you didn't think far enough ahead and you have nothing to show for your efforts."

"Did you even consider how much Eisenhower history was lost when you removed the Eisenhower Institute office?" demanded a retired professor who taught at the college prior to the sale.

Current students also identify the sale of the campus as the moment when their education began to go downhill. They now commute via the internet to what is now an all-digital institution, but are unsatisfied by what they see as an illegitimate fulfillment of Gettysburg College's commitment to the liberal arts.

"Why should we get a less effective education because you wanted to turn our school into an empty field?" one Gettysburg undergraduate complained.

The most controversial project has been the multi-million dollar reconstruction of Linnaean Hall, which critics have slammed for being grossly expensive with minimal historic value. Ongoing struggles to find funding for the project have resulted in the construction being stalled for the last two years. A plan to remove post-war additions to Pennsylvania Hall is also in limbo for the same reason.

Your correspondent visited the campus this afternoon to interview battlefield tourists about their thoughts on this issue. When he realized that the campus was deserted, he went to a more prominent spot on the battlefield to collect testimonials from visitors.

"I don't really get it," admitted Jason Brooks, of New York. "The campus isn't exactly the High Water Mark or Little Round Top. Why would I even want to see it?"

Clearly, the SCWP will have some work to do in order to convince the public and its benefactors that the endeavor has been worthwhile and is deserving of additional funding to complete the restoration of campus.

<http://gettyburgcompiler.com/2015/05/08/gettyburg-college-campus-purchased-by-preservation-society/>