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CWI Radio Report: Dedication Day and Remembrance Day 2015

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Abstract

These were the words delivered by President Abraham Lincoln at the dedication ceremony of the Soldiers National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19th, 1863. The National Cemetery was made possible by the efforts of local attorneys David Wills and David McConaughy. President Lincoln was invited to give "a few appropriate remarks" at the dedication of the new national cemetery by Wills, and stayed at Wills' house, located in Union Square at the center of town. At the dedication ceremony, Edward Everett, an acclaimed orator at the time, delivered the main speech of the afternoon. Everett's account of the battle and eulogy for the Union soldiers killed there lasted over two hours. President Lincoln's speech followed immediately after Everett's speech and lasted just over two minutes [*excerpt*].

Keywords

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, Dedication Day, Remembrance Day, Gettysburg National Military Park

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

CWI Radio Report: Dedication Day and Remembrance Day 2015

November 17, 2015

By Jeff Lauck '18



Luminaria at Gettysburg National Cemetery, 2014.

UPDATE: The Dedication Day ceremony has been moved to the College Union Building at Gettysburg College due to inclement weather.

Click the play button below in order to listen to Jeff's special report on this week's Civil War commemorations here in Gettysburg. You can also scroll down to read through the transcript if you'd prefer. This report will be airing on [WZBT](#) throughout this week. Thanks to WZBT 91.1 FM for their help in producing this piece.

[listen at: <http://gettysburgcompiler.com/2015/11/17/cwi-radio-report-dedication-day-and-remembrance-day-2015/>]

Transcript:

This is a special report from the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College.

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation – or any nation so conceived and so dedicated – can long endure.

We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field to serve as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives so that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men – living and dead – who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us – the living – rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here – dedicated – to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.

That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.

That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. And that government of the people – by the people – for the people – shall not perish from the earth.

These were the words delivered by President Abraham Lincoln at the dedication ceremony of the Soldiers National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19th, 1863. The National Cemetery was made possible by the efforts of local attorneys David Wills and David McConaughy. President Lincoln was invited to give “a few appropriate remarks” at the dedication of the new national cemetery by Wills, and stayed at Wills’ house, located in Union Square at the center of town. At the dedication ceremony, Edward Everett, an acclaimed orator at the time, delivered the main speech of the afternoon. Everett’s account of the battle and eulogy for the Union soldiers killed there lasted over two hours. President Lincoln’s speech followed immediately after Everett’s speech and lasted just over two minutes.

In under 300 words, President Lincoln seemed to capture the sentiment of the entire Civil War. Lincoln begins by invoking the spirit of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence, signed only “four score and seven,” or eighty-seven years prior to Lincoln’s speech. In doing so, he channels the messages of liberty and freedom that our country was founded on and that had become a central part of the Union war aims in the Civil War thanks to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation less than a year earlier.

Lincoln also reminds us that the Civil War is not only a fight for liberty, but also a test to see if the ideas that our Founders had in creating this nation could survive. The “Great American Experiment” was still very new when President Lincoln spoke that day in Gettysburg. The Civil War had been the greatest test that the new Republic had faced. According to Lincoln, the Civil War was therefore not only a struggle to preserve American democracy, but to preserve democracy for the future of the entire human race.

This Thursday, November 19th, marks the 152nd anniversary of President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery in Gettysburg. As such, there are a number of events slated to commemorate the anniversary. Gettysburg National Military Park, the Gettysburg Foundation, the Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania, and Gettysburg College will be hosting the Dedication Day Ceremony on November 19 that the College Union Building Ballroom at Gettysburg College. The Keynote speech will be delivered by Garrison Keillor, the host of the long time radio program A Prairie Home Companion. The event begins at 10AM on Thursday, but spectators are encouraged to arrive early and bring their own chairs. Parking is available in Lot #3 of the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center.

Later, on the evening of November 19th, the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College will be hosting the 54th annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture. This year’s Fortenbaugh Lecture is titled “A Tale of Two Armies: The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and the Union Army of the Potomac” and will be delivered by Dr. Joseph T. Glatthaar, the Stephenson Distinguished Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The event starts at 7PM and will be located at the Majestic Theater on Carlisle Street in Gettysburg.

On Saturday, November 21st, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and Veterans Reserve will be sponsoring the annual Remembrance Day events. At 10AM, there will be a wreath-laying ceremony at the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial on Hancock Avenue on the Gettysburg battlefield. At 1PM, there will a parade throughout town featuring a number of Civil War reenacting groups and organizations.

Later on the night of Saturday, November 21st, The Gettysburg Foundation will be hosting the 13th Annual Remembrance Illumination at the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. Volunteers will be placing luminaries on the graves of all soldiers in the cemetery and reading the names of all 3,512 Civil War soldiers in the cemetery. The event will run from 5:30PM until 9PM. All events are free and open to the public.

I’m Jeff Lauck, and this has been a special report from the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, a co-production with WZBT.

