

Patriot Days to return to York

People in Civil War attire will roam streets and share stories inside historic buildings

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Jun 18, 2006 — It's not a sedate occasion. The Civil War Celebrity Tea in York will feature Irish music and the old-time, quick dance steps of circles and lines and trading partners.

Such rollicking dances brought together the rich and poor, young and old, urban and rural Americans at the time of the Civil War.

The tea on June 23 will open this year's third Patriot Days Celebration in York. The three-day celebration merges Patriot Days with York's designation as one of seven gateway communities on Pennsylvania Civil War Trails, said Travis Wachter, marketing coordinator for York County Heritage Trust.

"The Confederate Occupation of York: A Drama," is written by a hometown man, Scott Butcher. After the tea, it will be performed by local actors on the steps of the former courthouse on East Market Street.

The steps make a great stage, Butcher said. The columns (moved from a prior courthouse) were standing in 1863 and witnessed the occupation. It's the perfect backdrop, he said.

"For most of the past 143 years, York downplayed its Civil War experience because of the surrender," Butcher said Tuesday. "The focus was always on the Revolutionary War."

He said "East of Gettysburg," by Daily Record/Sunday News editor Jim McClure, broke the taboo against speaking about York and the Civil War.

Butcher wrote his play three years ago for the first Patriot Days celebration. The drama changes each year as Butcher unearths letters and diaries of folks who lived through the occupation.

Col. Clement Evans, a Georgia brigade commander, will join the cast this year.

"He took down the American flag in Center Square," Butcher said. "He wrote of it in his diary and in a letter to his wife. He took down the 35-foot American flag because his troops would have had to pass underneath it."

Butcher said the drama needed Evans.

Jim Coombes, a PeoplesBank manager, will play the part in a wool uniform he bought in Gettysburg. His 8-year-old daughter Ciara's role is to present a bouquet of flowers to Brig. Gen. John B. Gordon, the first Confederate general to arrive in York with 1,800 soldiers.

Inside the bouquet was a note and diagram of the Union position in Wrightsville, Coombes said.

Saturday, Coombes will wear the wool uniform of a 38th Regiment Georgia private and march along Market Street. His wife, Lorraine, will dress as Mary Ficher, a nurse, at Penn Park and walk on the streets with Ciara and their 5-year-old son, Grant, in civilian attire.

The Civil War history of York intrigues him, Coombes said.

"I have a passion to know what people were feeling then and what they are feeling today," Coombes said. "Why was the war fought? What was it fought over? What's their impression of York. You would have thought York was far enough north to be firmly in the Union camp."

Pennsylvania Civil War Trails

York's Patriot Days grew from two days to three to fulfill its role as one of the seven gateway communities in south-central Pennsylvania that played important roles in the Gettysburg campaign, said Richard Banz, director of interpretation and collections for the Heritage Trust.

Friday's Victorian tea and drama highlight York's story before and after June 28, 1863, Banz said.

Saturday's programs give people a feel for what it was like in York during the occupation. The people in period dress all have stories to tell.

Sunday will be more intimate with small groups in the Agricultural and Industrial Museum watching and participating in demonstrations.

The state's Department of Community & Economic Development launched the Civil War Trails project last year to lure visitors to venture beyond Gettysburg to discover the rich history in nearby towns, said Carrie Fisher, an agency spokeswoman.

The goal is to boost tourism and local economies. Community historians work with travel industry representatives from local convention and visitors' bureaus to focus on events and develop travel packages.

The community bears the expense of its festivities; the state assists with

marketing.

Down the road, the state will install Civil War trail signs bearing a kepi cap logo.

"We didn't want a sword or gun or any kind of weapon," Lenwood O. Sloan, director of cultural and heritage tourism in community and economic development, said. "The kepi was worn by every man. It's a hat each man would shape to his liking."

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Patriot Days: A Prelude to Gettysburg

The Pennsylvania Civil War Trail Discovery Weekend and York Patriot Days will be held Friday, June 23, through Sunday, June 25. Here is a schedule of events:

June 23

- **Victorian Tea: Shake Hands with History:** 4:30 to 6:45 p.m. at York County Heritage Trust, 250 E. Market St. Includes music beginning at 4 p.m. The Victorian Dance Ensemble will perform and teach guests the social dances of the mid-19th century. Light fare and interaction with 19th-century York personalities in period dress. Cost: \$20 a person.

- **"The Confederate Occupation of York: A Drama":** 7 p.m. on the courthouse steps at 28 E. Market St. with entertainment before and after by musicians Susquehanna Travelers. Free.

- **Candlelight walking tour** of York's historic district and buildings that stood during the Confederate occupation at 8:30 p.m. Begins at courthouse, 28 E. Market St. \$10 a person includes a free beverage for adults only at Harp & Fiddle Irish Pub. For tickets to the tea or tour, call York County Heritage Trust at 848-1587, ext. 210. **June 24**

- **Vintage Cars of Yesteryear** display from 9:55 a.m. to 7:55 p.m. on Market Street between George and Duke streets. Free.

Unless noted otherwise, the following are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and free:

- **Civil War and Victorian Living History Program and Civil War Encampment** at the Bonham House and Yard, 152 E. Market St., a Victorian mansion with guides in period dress. Includes a Union Army hospital, medicines and photography. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- **William Goodridge House Living History Program** with interpreters in period dress at 123 E. Philadelphia St. Goodridge, a freed slave and prominent York entrepreneur, was one of the region's most important underground railroad conductors. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- **America 1863: A Divided Country** with street activities. Talk with local regional

historians and with people in period dress portraying Union and Confederate officers and notable residents. Sidewalk vendors and horse-drawn wagon and carriage rides for a fee.

- **Civil War Exhibits at the Historical Society Museum** at 250 E. Market St. from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. includes an exhibit of the works of 19th-century folk artist Lewis Miller, who witnessed the Confederate occupation.

- **P.A. Small Residence** (Lafayette Club) at 59 E. Market St. where Cassandra Small penned letters about the Confederate occupation.

- **David E. Small Residence**(Brownstone section of Martin Library) at 153 E. Market St. includes tours and storytelling for children.

- **Gen. Michael P. Small Residence**(Schintz Studio) at 249 E. Market St. Michael Small, Robert E. Lee and Jeb Stuart put down John Brown's uprising at Harper's Ferry. Then, Small stayed with the Union, while Lee and Stuart joined the Confederates.

- **A Haunted Triple Feature** every half hour from 8 to 11 p.m. at the Bonham House, 152 E. Market St. with 30 minutes of Civil War ghost tales around a campfire, a 30-minute walking tour dwelling on the "dark side" of York and 30 minutes of Victorian ghost stories at the Goodridge House.

The tour costs \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Seating is limited. For reservations, call 848-1587. **June 25**

- **Civilian and Soldier Life During the Civil War** from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Agricultural and Industrial Museum, 217 W. Princess St. Costumed interpreters will present interactive demonstrations for Civil War buffs. Includes a "white glove" table for handling artifacts, period music and singing, and craft projects to take home. The three-story 19th-century gristmill will operate. Free. **For details**

- On the events, call 848-1587 or visit <http://www.patriotdays.net> or <http://www.yorkheritage.org>.

- On Civil War Trails Discovery Weekends, call 1-800-VISIT-PA (847-4872) or visit <http://www.visitpa.com/civilwartrails>.