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HUGE CELEBRATION

Millions of visitors expected at 150th Civil War anniversary

BY SCOT ANDREW PITZER
Times Staff Writer

Four million visitors are expected to descend upon Gettysburg from 2011-2015, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War.

Events are being held all over the state to commemorate the anniversary, and Gettysburg will be a key focal point of that celebration.

“It will be our Olympic moment. It’s going to be huge,” said Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau President Norris Flowers.

Tuesday marked the event’s official kickoff, with media announcements in Gettysburg, Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The multi-year celebration will highlight the state’s role in the Civil War via traveling exhibits, special events and a Web site.

“Many states are doing something similar to Pennsylvania,” said James Pickman, a consultant with the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC).

“You’re pivotal, what happens here in Gettysburg,” he added.

Plans are already under way to accommodate the four million visitors who are estimated to visit the Gettysburg area, and nearby battlefield. The Battle of Gettysburg was fought here July 1-3, 1863, and historians consider it the “turning point” in the Civil War.

“Imagine four million people here at one time,” said Main Street Gettysburg Executive Director Deb Adamik.

“We need to prepare our community for that,” Adamik said. “This is a big deal.”

The statewide celebration, dubbed “Pennsylvania Civil War 150,” is a unified alliance created at the request of Gov. Ed Rendell.

“The role of the Keystone State in the war that redefined this nation has new meaning for a new generation,” said PHMC Executive Director Barbara Franco.

“The Pennsylvania Civil War 150 commemoration is far more than a formal remembrance,” she added.

“It is a collection of stories brought to life that are as epic as the fields at Gettysburg or as small as the struggles of a soldier’s wife working to survive her husband’s absence on a Pennsylvania farm,” Franco continued. “Through these stories, Pennsylvania Civil War 150 will renew interest and engagement in our state’s heritage.”

Organizers rolled out plans Tuesday for the \$12 million, four-year long commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Using traveling exhibits, special programs and an interactive Web site, the celebration will chronicle the state’s role in the Civil War, including the Battle of Gettysburg.

The Web site is planned to present personal stories of Pennsylvania, while a 53-foot-long tractor trailer — The Civil War Road Show — will bring interactive exhibits to the state’s 67 counties, beginning in 2011.