

Unity Park in Gettysburg unveiled by 15-year-old Civil War re-enactor

Written by Jennifer Wentz, *The Evening Sun*, July 6, 2015.

A tiny patch of land now tucked between a Gettysburg school and an ice cream



Eagle Scout candidate Andrew Adam reacts during the ceremony dedicating Unity Park in Gettysburg on July 5.

shop was once in the crossfire of a town literally divided by war.

As Confederate sharpshooters took position in houses off of what is now Lefever Street, Union troops gathered just a couple hundred yards away on Cemetery and Culp's hills. More than 9,000 men were killed in the three days fighting at Gettysburg.

More than 150 years later, 15-year-old re-enactor Andrew Adam stood in that sliver of no man's land between the Union and Confederate positions to dedicate a monument he hopes will show visitors what the country can accomplish when it stands together.

Andrew unveiled Unity Park to a crowd of dozens of re-enactors, family members and wandering tourists Sunday, one day after the end of the 152nd anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. The small plaza includes criss-crossing walkways, benches, flags and informative boards and is brought together by a central bronze statue of a Civil War drummer boy.

For Andrew, a ninth-grader and Eagle Scout candidate from Mechanicsburg, the \$200,000 project is the culmination of two years of fundraising, research and planning.

The idea for the park originated from a trip his family took to Gettysburg for the 150th commemoration of the town's battle. Andrew, who portrays a drummer boy for the United States Volunteers re-enacting unit, and his brother noticed

that few memorials existed to recognize the Civil War's musicians.

Many of those boys, some as young as 12, used their drums, fifes and other instruments to direct troops, he explained. Some gave their lives before their 18th birthdays.

That conversation between Andrew and his brother evolved into a big idea: the creation of a park to educate the public and honor these musicians. But as the project grew, so did the challenges.

The park required hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete. The bronze statue that would serve at its centerpiece, he figured, should be made in America, but many monument companies wanted to have the work completed overseas.

And, finally, he needed a place to put the park. After be-



Members of the Maryland and Pennsylvania divisions of Sons of Confederate Veterans stand across the street during the Unity Park dedication ceremony

ing turned down near his home in Mechanicsburg, he brought the proposal back to the place where the idea started: Gettysburg.

"When we looked at those plans, certainly they were ambitious," Gettysburg Area School District Supt. Larry Redding said with a smile, recalling the school board meeting Andrew attended nine months ago to pitch his idea.

The park, though, eventually came together thanks to dozens of local and national sponsors who pitched in money, ideas or support.

"It shows what we can get done as a country," Andrew said.

The park does, in fact, represent a conscious effort to unify materials, ideas and commemorations of different parts of the country, The park's central



Musicians from the 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Volunteer Corps and Johnson's Division, Army of Northern Virginia, stand during the ceremony on July 5.

statue was cast in bronze in the North and sits on a pedestal crafted in the South. Its benches were made in the South but feature custom ends from the North. Thirty-six boxwood shrubs surround the park, each one representing the states that made up the United States at the end of the Civil War.

Gettysburg is an appropriate place for Andrew's project because it was the same place

where troops from both sides once fought for unity, said Michael Landree, National Executive Director of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

"Now we have a monument to dedicate to that purpose, and that purpose alone," he said.

Edward Gantt, a re-enactor for the United States Colored Troops, agreed, noting that although unity will always have its foes, all it takes is for one small voice to bring people together.

"It requires someone, someone dedicated like young Mr. Andrew Adam, to make sure



The unveiled statue, which now stands on Lefever Street in Unity Park, photographed on July 5.

that unity doesn't become a part of our past," Gantt said.

The story continues...

On November 3rd ALBG president Joe Mieczkowski presented a certificate to Andrew Adam on behalf of the Association of Licensed Battlefield Guides "for his efforts to create Unity Park". The photo was taken in front of the Visitor Center.

If you would like to contribute to the Unity Park Fund thus assist in reducing the monies still owed to create the park, and also to maintain the park for the future, go to www.unitypark2015.org. Click on the "contribute" button at the bottom of the page. Andrew and his family thank you.

