

# Gettysburg Museum Foundation

The Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation, 1575 I Street, N.W., Suite 425, Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 216-9030, Toll free: 866-889-1243; info@gettysburgfoundation.org

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CONTACTS: Bob Wilburn, Gettysburg Museum Foundation (202) 216-9030  
Arthur R. Crivella, ASE Edge (412) 561-1900

## Pittsburgh Company Donates Knowledge, Expertise to Bring Access To Gettysburg's Vast Historical Resources Closer to Reality

GETTYSBURG, Pa. -- A Pittsburgh company is donating its expertise to the Gettysburg National Military Park so it can digitize and electronically organize its extensive collection of historical resources and archives, and make it accessible online to visitors on-site and off. In the process, the project also will help ensure preservation of the collection for future generations.

ASE Edge, which helps businesses understand, control and simplify complex operations through systems and processes, is working with the Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation to provide the park with a system that will enable it to manage its information and digital assets. The project, underway for the last two years and valued, to date, at more than \$750,000, has almost unlimited potential to enrich the experience of visitors to Gettysburg, as well as historians, scholars and students, said Foundation President Robert C. Wilburn.

"When I first came to the Foundation, I spoke of my hopes of having Gettysburg's collections digitized, and the potential such a project held for today's visitors and future generations," Wilburn said. "This is a dream of most museums and historic sites. Unfortunately, funding realities make it unlikely that dream will come true for most of them in the foreseeable future. Thanks to ASE Edge's generous commitment of expertise, that dream is becoming a reality at Gettysburg. We are most grateful to Art Crivella and Wayne West for this support."

The project, Wilburn said, will improve visitor experiences and allow for more efficient operation of the park. And he sees opportunities for future applications

that include handheld devices to assist visitors to the battlefield, multi-media presentations and exhibits, assistance with trip planning and customized battlefield tours, or virtual educational programs. Public access to the digitized records is anticipated when the new museum and visitor center opens, scheduled in 2006.



Stephen Sullivan, park volunteer and a senior at Mount Saint Mary's College, scans a 1930's letter about the park's monuments.  
*(National Park Service)*

"Objective number one," says Arthur R. Crivella, a partner at ASE Edge, "is to ensure the park has the tools to run itself in the 21st century." The first step includes digitizing the park's collections and data, including images and, where appropriate, three-dimensional models of objects, panoramic views, global positioning satellite data on troop movements, monuments and what happened where, and current as well as archival business records. A critical next step is addition of records related to the park's management systems, including maintenance and interpretive and visitor services. Completion of those components is the focus of the ASE Edge donation.

As the park's collections of archives and artifacts are digitized, Crivella notes, scholars, researchers and others wishing to study them will be able to do so online, reducing significantly any handling of the fragile materials. When combined with new storage facilities in the planned museum and visitor center, the project will ensure that the park meets its critical preservation goals.

Partners Crivella and West founded ASE Edge in 1986. Users of the company's expertise are chiefly large corporate clients. Crivella says he and West have for some time wanted to see how their expertise could be applied to historic sites; Gettysburg is the first.

It was a logical choice for the two, who spent the early days of their partnership discussing Civil War battles and battle sites while driving long distances from appointment to appointment. "Gettysburg is about where a large measure of our national consciousness was formed," Crivella says. "Wayne and I always dreamed of what could be done. The need is really important but sadly lacking because there are such limited resources among the non-profit historic sites."

Crivella, who recently endowed the care and maintenance of the Lincoln Speech Memorial as part of the park's "Adopt a Position" program, met with Wilburn shortly after his appointment as Foundation president in late 2000. "This was our

chance, and we intend to do it right," Crivella says. He estimates it will take another two years to complete the project.

The Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation is a nonprofit educational institution working in partnership with the National Park Service to preserve the resources of the park, to tell the story of the Gettysburg Campaign, and to give visitors a deeper, more lasting appreciation for what happened here.

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97 Taneytown Road

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325