



An American Tour: *25*



Gettysburg's *Eternal Light Peace Memorial*

Located on the summit of Oak Hill and surrounded by guns that mark Confederate artillery positions, the Eternal Light Peace Memorial overlooks the July 1st battlefield. The memorial was the sentimental brainchild of Union and Confederate veterans who first proposed the monument during the 1913 Anniversary and reunion celebration at Gettysburg. Funds for the project were difficult to find and the Great Depression postponed its construction. Through the personal efforts of governors, veteran groups and several state legislatures, the memorial project was revived and finally came to fruition.

It was a torridly hot afternoon on July 3, 1938, when former Union and Confederate soldiers met to dedicate this memorial to "Peace Eternal in a Nation United" during the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the battle. A Union and a Confederate veteran pulled the ropes to unveil the memorial shaft that towers 47 1/2 feet above Oak Hill. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the featured speaker at the ceremony and pushed the button which lit the gas flame on top of the monument shaft. "Immortal deeds and immortal words have created here at Gettysburg a shrine of American patriotism," the President began. "We are encompassed by 'the last full measure' of many men and by the simple words in which Abraham Lincoln expressed the simple faith for which they died." The President went on to compare the task set before Lincoln and the American people in 1863, with the task set before Americans in 1938. Of the veterans in blue and gray, Roosevelt reminded the audience, "All of them we honor, not asking under which Flag they fought then- thankful that they stand together under one Flag now." [<http://www.nps.gov/archive/gett/getttour/tstops/tstd-03.htm>]

