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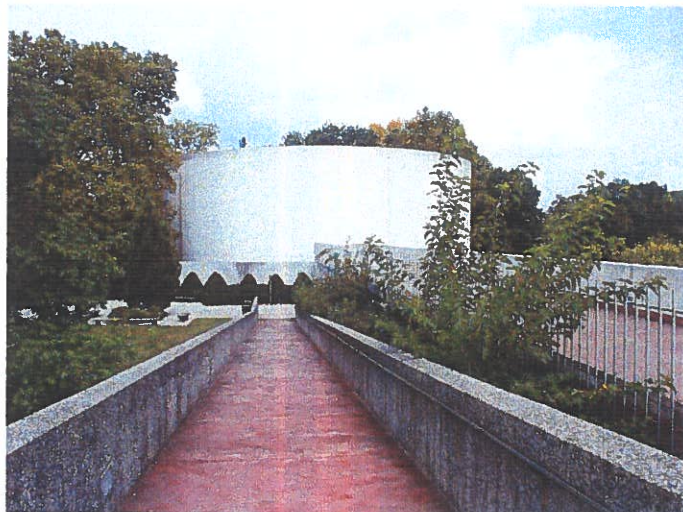
**“THE GETTYSBURG CYCLORAMA”
A TALK BY PHIL KOHARI
SHELTER HOUSE, FRED FULLER PARK, KENT
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2024, AT 7:30 P.M.**

Often called the IMAX theaters of the 19th century, cycloramas captured the public’s imagination as these massive paintings provided the illusion of actually being present in the scene rendered on canvas.

The story of the Gettysburg Cyclorama is one of triumph, loss, and resurrection. The history of this painting and its exhibition sites reflects America’s changing attitudes towards popular entertainment and how the nation’s heritage continues to be appreciated today.

Phil’s folks gave him his first Civil War books for Christmas 1961, which led him to a childhood of pondering those while absorbing Walt Disney history lessons. He left that behind for high school sports and later to join the Woodstock Generation. He found his adult passion for the American Civil War after reading Bruce Catton’s *A Stillness at Appomattox* and then proceeded to burden his wife and children with way too many battlefield excursions. After a lengthy career as an engineering recruiter, he’s now retired, living with his wife Debbie in Tallmadge, and he remains a fervent admirer of Robert E Lee and everything dachshund.

Our optional pre-meeting dinner will be at Eddy’s Deli & Restaurant, 4581 Kent Road in Stow, beginning at 5:30 p.m.



Cyclorama Building, part of Mission 66 Project, designed by Richard Neutra and Robert E. Alexander. Dedicated 1962. demolished 2013. Photo taken September 2005, just before the Cyclorama was removed.

A Tale of Two Survivors: The Gettysburg and Atlanta Cycloramas

By Suzanne Wray

Excerpted from <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/a-tale-of-two-cycloramas.htm>

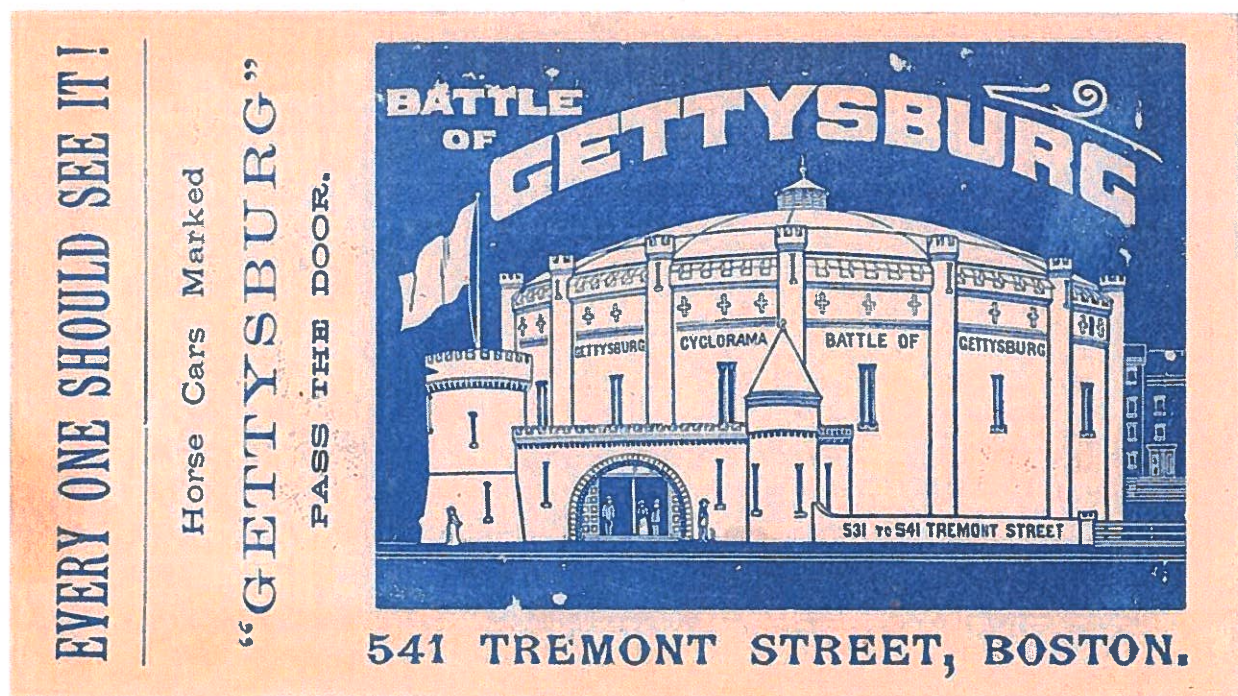
In the nineteenth century, the painted panorama allowed viewers to immerse themselves in another world, be it a city or a battlefield. The purpose-built building in which the realistic circular painting was housed was part of the apparatus needed to create the desired illusion: viewers saw the painting from a circular platform, and a three-dimensional foreground helped disguise the point at which the painting ended and the foreground began. By the late 1800s, the size of paintings and buildings had been standardized, enabling panoramas to be exchanged between cities.

In the United States, the panorama was often called a “cyclorama” and paintings of Civil War battles became the most popular subjects. Large cities often held more than one panorama rotunda and competed for an audience, while studios in Mott Haven, New York, Milwaukee, and Englewood, Illinois turned out the large canvases.

As the popularity of the panorama waned, buildings were demolished or renovated to serve other purposes, and cyclorama paintings often disappeared into storage, or were destroyed. Or they were shown in other settings: hung around the walls of a skating rink or even a department store, the illusion of “being there” was lost. Worlds’ Fairs and similar exhibitions often had a cyclorama on display, thus keeping them on display long after they had disappeared from most cities.

Changing ideas about how a battle or battlefield should be presented to the public also changed ideas about the buildings in which the cycloramas were housed, and how they were shown. Both the Gettysburg Cyclorama and the Atlanta Cyclorama were improperly hung and the paintings deteriorated; misguided preservation attempts often did more damage.

The Gettysburg and Atlanta Cycloramas have both survived. The Gettysburg painting was recently restored and is housed in a new building on the battlefield. The Atlanta Cyclorama is being moved to a new building and will be restored. Tourists today, living in an age where virtual reality is often spoken about, now can experience one of its precursors: the cyclorama.



Advertisement for the Battle of Gettysburg cyclorama displayed in Boston, c. 1884-1899
Boardman Collection/Atlanta History Center