

# CREATING A NEW HOME FOR CIVIL WAR HISTORY

July 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. So it was fitting during this special anniversary year that a building so key to the battle would not only be preserved but would become a new museum to showcase key aspects of that epic struggle, and of American life at that time.

Since 1832, Schmucker Hall on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg has provided one of the best views of the surrounding countryside. Its distinctive, green-roofed cupola atop the fourth story is not only its most distinctive architectural feature, but it provided a strategic advantage during wartime. That's partly why the structure played such a critical role during the battle. It also was used as a military hospital to treat wounded soldiers.

## SAVING A HISTORIC BUILDING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Despite its considerable historical significance, 140 years later, the structure was deteriorating. A plan was needed to preserve the building in a way that drew on its past to provide it with a future purpose. That's when some forward-thinking people at the Adams County Historical Society and the seminary came up with the idea of rehabilitating the brick structure to create the new Seminary Ridge Museum. Among the many challenges facing the project was financing the \$15 million initiative.

## COMMONWEALTH CORNERSTONE GROUP SHARES THE VISION

Fortunately, Commonwealth Cornerstone Group (CCG), a nonprofit arm of PHFA, recognized the value of the project — not only to preserve Civil War history but also to provide an economic stimulus for the borough of Gettysburg and Adams County.

“Commonwealth Cornerstone Group personnel were intimately involved through the process, negotiating a really complex financing structure,” explains Emried Cole, a representative of the seminary and a key member of the historical foundation that worked to preserve the building. “New Markets Tax Credits [administered by CCG] are in the nature of community development tax credits. So CCG recognized the importance of the museum, and its construction and operation, to the economy of the Gettysburg community.”

According to plan, with financial assistance from CCG, the building's renovation was completed right on schedule. Both short-term and long-term, the project is providing an economic stimulus benefiting the region. Equally important is its preservation of Civil War history that now is on public display for visitors in a building that's as much a part of the Battle of Gettysburg as the powerful stories it shares. 🏠

