



Life-size diorama showing Union medics and a wounded soldier



"Stonewall" Jackson's gauntlet

## Spanning New Heights

*James H. Hillestad, Member No. 6, forms the battle lines at the National Civil War Museum*

On a towering ridge overlooking the Susquehanna River and Pennsylvania's capital city of Harrisburg, is the marvelous National Civil War Museum. The museum opened in 2001 and contains 65,000 square feet of interactive displays and more than 4,400 original artifacts of the Civil War, including General George Pickett's kepi and "Stonewall" Jackson's gauntlet glove.

I visited this jewel of a museum last spring and felt privileged to be invited to put on display four dioramas which highlight the three-day battle of Gettysburg. Each diorama is two feet by four feet, for a total of 32 square feet. More than 400 W. Britain figures are deployed in action.

The dioramas were installed on July 27. As you can imagine, transporting four complex, large dioramas was a challenge. We rented a large van and built a rack to hold the dioramas on two levels. The two-hour drive to the museum was uneventful -- until the last half-mile, when ominous creakings and squeakings started to emanate from the rack. Holding our breath and creeping carefully along, we reached the museum entrance, where Richard Walker, General Manager of



From left to right, David Patterson, Richard Walker, and the writer

W. Britain awaited us. With his help, we carried the dioramas inside and placed them under specially-constructed Perspex domes. Each diorama is accompanied by a descriptive narrative, along with a map keyed to the locations of the four scenes.

The scenes depicted are Buford's stand on the Chambersburg Pike, The Wheatfield, the battle of



One of the many exhibit rooms at the Museum



The Bible of Robert E. Lee

Culp's Hill, and Pickett's Charge.

It was a delightful exercise, thanks to the involvement of David Patterson, CEO of the museum and Brett Kelley, Curator. The museum is located less than 30 miles north of Gettysburg and is a "must-see" if you are a Civil War buff. The website gives you a taste -- [www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org](http://www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org). The dioramas will be on display in the Gettysburg room of the museum through the sesquicentennial of the battle in 2013. ■

**Jim Hillestad operates under the name The Toy Soldier Museum. His museum, containing more than 35,000 figures and a large collection of militaria, is located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. For directions and hours, call him at 570/629-7227, or visit his new website: [www.the-toy-soldier.com](http://www.the-toy-soldier.com)**