

CONCLUSION

This exhibit is about men, women, and children whose lives were profoundly affected—and in some cases ended—by a war that took place nearly one and one half centuries ago. Why should we care about them today and in the future? Why is it important for us to understand their experiences?

The Civil War deeply touched every person and every institution in our country. It is considered our greatest national crisis. More than 500,000 people died. Despite its horror, however, the Civil War ultimately preserved the unified nation we know today.

Tragically, wars have continued to cast their shadows over our history. Just as in the Civil War, young men and women have stepped forward again and again to serve their country. Whether departing by foot, horseback, train, or plane, those going off to war have always felt the same pain of separation and the fear of what lies ahead. All too often soldiers have come home scarred for life, both physically and emotionally. Far too often, they have not come home at all. Family and friends have been left behind to anxiously wait until the survivors return, hoping and praying each day for their safety. The extreme financial and emotional strains felt by those remaining at home have not diminished over the years.

We honor those who served their town and their country in the Civil War. We tell their stories not to glorify war, but to inspire those living today to re-dedicate themselves to working for peace. We tell their stories to explore their enduring relevance in this century. May we learn from the horrors of the past and commit ourselves, in the spirit of these long-departed soldiers, to working for a better future.