FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Autry Presents

Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West

Exhibition reframes Civil War history by demonstrating
significance of the West to the turbulent national conflict

Media Preview: Thursday, April 23, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
RSVP to communications@theautry.org or 323.495.4370.

Los Angeles, CA (April 2, 2015)—The West is seldom considered in the context of the Civil War, yet Westward expansion shaped the issues that ignited that tumultuous conflict. Westerners fought in the war for both the Union and the Confederacy, felt its impact at home, and struggled with its civil rights legacy in the Reconstruction era. On view at the Autry National Center of the American West from April 25, 2015, through January 3, 2016, Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West investigates how Westward expansion repeatedly tested the meaning of freedom and the rights of individuals.

The exhibition combines personal stories of Americans with audio-visual presentations and extraordinary historical artifacts. Visitors will come to know individuals such as Sacagawea, John Sutter,
Jesse and Frank James, Andrés Pico, Biddy Mason, Big Tree, and others. Artifact highlights include many one-of-a-kind pieces: Jefferson Davis’s pistol, Ulysses S. Grant’s revolver, John Fremont’s 1842 expedition flag, George Armstrong Custer’s Bible, and Kicking Bear’s muslin painting of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Works by artists such as Frederic Remington and John Gast are represented, as well as original period photography by the likes of Timothy O’Sullivan, Alexander Gardner, and William Henry Jackson.

“Drawing on new scholarly research and rooted in the Autry mission, Empire and Liberty explores the complex, diverse, and often untold stories of the American West to offer a surprising lens on the Civil War era,” said W. Richard West, Jr., President and CEO of the Autry.

*Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West* is co-curated by Carolyn Brucken, the Autry’s Curator of Western Women’s History, and Virginia Scharff, the Autry’s Chair of Western Women’s History. An award-winning author, Scharff is Distinguished Professor of History and Associate Provost for Faculty Development at the University of New Mexico, where she also serves as Director of the Center for the Southwest. She is the editor of the exhibition’s companion publication.

"We hold that you cannot understand the Civil War without addressing the significance of the West to the creation and development of the United States, and you cannot understand the West without taking into account the causes, contingencies, and consequences of the nation’s cataclysmic Civil War,” said Brucken.

*Left:* Military drum of Andrés Pico, circa 1846. Acquisition made possible by the Ramona chapter, Native Sons of the Golden West. Autry National Center; 93.21.8 *Right:* Parade flag used by the 9th U.S. Cavalry, Buffalo Soldier regiment, 1875–1900. Purchased by Marv and Simona Elkin, Joanne and Monte Hale, and an Autry docent through the Gold-level Member Acquisitions Committee, 2002, Autry National Center; 2002.91.1

**The Fire Bell in the Night (1803–1820)**

*Empire and Liberty* is presented in four sections. Taking its title from Thomas Jefferson’s pronouncement on the Missouri Compromise, the exhibition opens with the Louisiana Purchase and early Westward...
expansion, using artifacts and narratives to demonstrate that slavery reached beyond the chattel slavery of the American South to include debt slavery repaid with labor, and captive slavery, a frequent practice in Native American cultures. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 incited fierce arguments and led to the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that divided the Western Territories into slave and non-slave sectors. In this section, an 1801 peace medal and a contemporary beaded peace medal box by Dyanni Hamilton-Youngbird (Navajo) further convey Westward expansion's complexities.

As co-curator Virginia Scharff explained, “Instead of focusing on the conflict between the free North and the slave South that culminated in a Civil War, we consider that epic struggle across a longer time and a larger field. And instead of imagining Westward expansion as something akin to a force of nature, we take into account the long history of the region and the many moments and forms of conquest.”

The Western Powder Keg (1820–1860)
The West became even more explosive as the nineteenth century progressed. This section describes aggressive campaigns to expel Native people from the South to the West, a move motivated by Southern cotton growers, whose profit-making ambitions snowballed with the invention of the cotton gin. The entry of Texas into the Union as a slave state proved a heated flashpoint, and the U.S.-Mexican War vastly increased the American empire and served as a training ground for future Civil War leaders Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, and Jefferson Davis. The California Gold Rush exposed many versions of forced labor. Gold Rush avarice was also devastating to Native populations, who were enslaved and murdered in genocidal numbers. A Californian, John Charles Fremont, was the nation’s first “Free Soil, Free Men” presidential candidate in 1856, the same year the pro and anti-slavery forces fought in “bloody” Kansas.

Potent objects on display include Texas slave bills of sale, an iron slave collar, portraits of noted Cherokees Major Ridge and John Ross, battle lithographs from the U.S.-Mexican War, a State of California bond for expeditions against Indians, and a “Beecher’s Bibles” Sharps carbine used in the struggle for Kansas. Evocative stories portray John Sutter’s exploitation of workers and trafficking of Native women and children; the murderous exploits of John Brown’s anti-slavery militia; and Biddy Mason’s California lawsuit that won freedom for her family.
Beyond the Blue and Grey (1861–1865)

*Empire and Liberty* depicts Westerners’ participation in the Civil War alongside its impact on life in the West. The war splintered communities as Westerners flocked to both armies. When Texan Confederates invaded the New Mexico territory, they were repelled by a small cadre of Army regulars reinforced by volunteers from California and Colorado. Numerous wars flared in Indian country, with the Dakota in Minnesota; Apache and Diné (Navajo) in Arizona and New Mexico; and Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche in Kansas, Colorado, and Texas. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Thirteenth Amendment triggered questions about unfree labor in the West, including Native slaves, indentured servitude in California, and debt slavery in New Mexico.

History comes alive in the stories of Sgt. Anderson Davis, a former slave who joined the 1st Missouri Colored Infantry and learned to read and write in the Army; Juan de la Guerra, a Californio who served in Arizona; Stand Watie, a Cherokee general who fought for the Confederacy; and Kit Carson, who waged a brutal war against the Diné ending in the infamous “Long Walk.” Visual highlights include a rare print of Lincoln’s final Emancipation Proclamation, one of the first Henry Model 1860 rifles, an Andersonville Prison Survivor Certificate, a quilt incorporating an image of the Confederate flag, Charles Goodnight’s Civil War items, and an unfinished flag weaving by a Diné spokeswoman.

The West and Reconstruction (1865–Present)

Through a combination of artifacts and narratives, this section explores how post-war Westward expansion continued to spawn battles over who could enjoy the rights of American citizenship. While the Transcontinental Railroad symbolized the reunited nation, it put new pressures on Native homelands and brought thousands of Chinese, Irish, African Americans, and war veterans to the West. The Civil War escalated other wars against Native people that continued into the Reconstruction period. The Fort Laramie Peace Commission, Red River War, and Custer’s infamous campaigns are illustrated with Native artifacts and military memorabilia.

Some unreconciled Confederates, such as Jesse and Frank James, became outlaws and inspired the romantic image of the gunfighter. African Americans moved West as they joined Western regiments as “Buffalo Soldiers,” and more than 50 all-black settlements were established in Indian and Oklahoma territories.

Emancipation and Reconstruction ignited debates over the status of Chinese residents. Laws limited Chinese immigration, banned Chinese ownership of land, and excluded Chinese Americans from citizenship. The San Francisco Chinese community protested a new law requiring photo identification in a massive campaign of civil disobedience. The exhibition documents their lives during this era in vintage photographs and an 1894 Certificate of Residence. Women’s suffrage found its first victories in the West, in Wyoming (1869) and Utah (1870), personified by Scotland-born Mormon convert Janet
Sherlock Smith, a Wyoming settler who became a hotel owner and election clerk.

In 1873 Mark Twain observed that the Civil War “wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations.” Empire and Liberty concludes by acknowledging unfinished struggles related to freedom and civil rights in America.

Left: Confederate quilt made by Susan Robb, 1861-1862. Courtesy of the Museum of Texas Tech University Center: Detail of a publicity still from Glory (1989) © TriStar Pictures Right: Henry Model 1860 rifle presented to Gideon Welles, the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, 1860. The George Gamble Collection, Autry National Center; 2012.2.18

RELATED PROGRAMS
A wide range of panels, demonstrations, participatory activities, and films are planned. Highlights include:

**Slavery and Unfree Labor Seminar**
Saturday, May 16, 11:00 a.m.
This seminar explores the wide range of unfree labor found in the American West and considers the study of a society through the treatment of its labor force.

**Black Powder Shooting Expedition**
Sunday, June 21, 2:00–6:00 p.m.
Don’t miss this rare opportunity to fire black powder firearms at a local shooting range with Richard Moll, the Autry’s Chief Conservator and an avid firearms collector, and Phil Spangenberger, Firearms Editor for True West and former Black Powder Editor for Guns & Ammo.

**Homefront and Battlefield: Quilts and Context in the Civil War**
Saturday, June 27, 11:00 a.m.
Lynne Bassett and Madelyn Shaw, Co-curators of the American Textile History Museum exhibit Homefront & Battlefield: Quilts & Context in the Civil War, discuss the exhibition and accompanying book.

**Quilts of Valor Quilting Bee**
Saturday, June 27, 1:00–4:00 p.m.
The Autry hosts a quilting bee in partnership with Quilts of Valor to create quilts for veterans and active military.

**Painting with Silver and Light: Civil War and Landscape Photography**
Sunday, July 26, 9:00 a.m.
Learn about Civil War-era photographic technology through a demonstration by collodion plate artist Will Dunniway, then join a conversation about Civil War photographers and the ways that techniques and ideas developed on the battlefield translated to some of the greatest photography of the West.

**What Is a Western? Film Series**
*Empire and Liberty* shows how the institution of slavery and the notion of liberty were intricately tied to Westward expansion. Many of the issues raised in the exhibition are also addressed onscreen.

- *Santa Fe Trail (1940)*
  Saturday, September 12, 1:30 p.m.
- *Glory (1989)*
  Saturday, October 10, 1:30 p.m.
- *The Outlaw Josey Wales (1976)*
  Saturday, November 14, 1:30 p.m.

**Invisible Injuries: Civil War Veterans and the Legacies of Violence**
Saturday, September 19, 2:00 p.m.
Panelists will explore the nineteenth-century concept of “Soldier’s Heart” and connect it with challenges facing today’s combatants.

**Firearms of the Civil War: The Impact of Innovation**
Saturday, December 5, 2:00 p.m.
Nineteenth-century firearms experts and Jeffrey Richardson, the Autry’s Gamble Curator of Western History, Popular Culture, and Firearms, examine industrialization through the lens of firearm technology, with a focus on the Civil War as impetus for innovation.

Additional programs to be announced. Programs subject to change.

*Empire and Liberty* related programs are sponsored in part by the John L. Gray Fund.

Tickets and details will be available at [TheAutry.org/civil-war](http://TheAutry.org/civil-war).

**RELATED PUBLICATIONS**
*Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West*
(University of California Press, 2015. Now available in the Autry Store.)
Edited by Virgina Scharff
Extending the reach of the exhibition, this companion book brings together leading historians to
examine 12 compelling artifacts and artworks that illuminate this period of national expansion, conflict, and renewal. The contributors to this innovative volume show how the West shaped the conflict over slavery and how slavery shaped the West, in the process defining American ideals about freedom and influencing battles over race, property and citizenship.

*Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States*  
Edited by Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill  
Award-winning historians such as William Deverell, Steven Hahn, Steven Kantrowitz, Martha Sandweiss, and Virginia Scharff offer original essays emphasizing how struggles over land, labor, sovereignty, and citizenship in the West transformed the U.S. nation-state in this tumultuous era.

**IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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**About the Autry National Center of the American West**

The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry’s collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant of Native American materials in the United States.

**Hours**
Museum and Autry Store:
Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Crossroads West Cafe:
Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The museum, store, and cafe are closed on Mondays. Visit TheAutry.org for more information.