New Jersey Historical Commission has funded the “The Weary and the Wounded: The Civil War Viewed from a Hospital Ship,” an exhibition which offers the opportunity to present this most critical era of American History in a broad historical context. The exhibit will be open from the Fall of 2011 through the summer of 2012. Dr. Jonathan Mercantini, Kean University’s Department of History, will serve as the Project Director. Susan Garino of Liberty Hall Museum and Terry Golway, Director of the Kean University Center for History, Politics and Policy, are the Co Directors.

The major theme of the exhibit will come from highlighting many important connections between the war at the front and the lived experiences of those who remained at home in New Jersey. To accomplish this visually, the exhibit will be divided into half. One side will be a re-creation of a hospital ship which it will be designed and constructed by members of the Kean University Drama Department. The other half of the exhibit will be a recreation of the living room at Liberty Hall during the Civil War era. Here pieces from Liberty Hall’s extensive material culture collections will be displayed to create an authentic sense of life on the home front.

The rich examination of life on the home front as well as on the battle front, will offer a variety of perspectives not often included in Civil War commemorations. Another significant advantage of this approach is that it does not glorify the war, but rather emphasizes the loss and sacrifices endured by so many people, in combat and at home.

In addition to the permanent exhibit, public programs will be held to promote the exhibition and to offer the public a greater understanding of specific elements of the display and the Civil War era in general. Liberty Hall Museum will work with the Kean University Department of History to offer a series of lectures on various topics over the entire lifespan of the exhibit.

Through this combination of documentary evidence, material culture, and historical lectures, the Civil War Exhibit at Liberty Hall Museum will provide high quality humanities content to the public.