



## THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

### OVERVIEW

The Museum of the American Revolution brings to life the events, people, and ideas of the founding of the United States and inspires a deep appreciation of the importance of the struggle that established a nation. With original artifacts, immersive galleries, dynamic theaters, and recreated historical environments, the experience takes visitors on a chronological journey from the roots of conflict in the 1760s through the creation of the American republic. Along the way, visitors learn about the rise of the armed resistance to British taxation, the creation of the Declaration of Independence, the long years of warfare that achieved victory, and the Revolution's continuing relevance.

### ★ KEY QUESTIONS

Four key questions guide visitors through the core exhibit's 16 galleries:

1. How did people become Revolutionaries?
2. How did the Revolution survive its darkest hours?
3. How revolutionary was the war?
4. What kind of nation did the Revolutionaries create?

### ★ AN INCLUSIVE STORY

Museum visitors explore the personal stories of the diverse range of individuals who were part of establishing our nation, including women, native people, and free and enslaved people of African descent. Visitors will expand their understanding of the "founding generation" as they listen to members of the Oneida Indian Nation debate whether to support the Revolutionary cause; climb aboard a privateer ship like the one on which 14-year-old free black James Forten volunteered; and examine artifacts including child-sized slave shackles, an intricately carved woman's busk (corset piece), and a signed 1773 volume "Poems on Various Subjects" by Phillis Wheatley, America's first published black female poet.

### ★ AUTHENTIC ARTIFACTS

At the heart of the museum experience is the opportunity to engage with several hundred original historic artifacts from the Museum's collection and from generous lenders. One of the premier collections of its kind, it includes several thousand objects from the period of the American Revolution, including a number of George Washington's personal belongings, as well as an impressive assortment of period weaponry, soldiers' and civilians' personal items, fine art, letters, diaries, and manuscripts. These "authentic witnesses" to the events of the American Revolution illustrate the stories told in each of the core exhibition's galleries.

### ★ IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

Immersive experiences plunge visitors into the action, and include a gallery featuring a nearly two-story replica of America's first Liberty Tree, where colonists gathered to organize a revolt against the British; a meeting of men and women from the Oneida Indian Nation about whether to support the British or Revolutionary side; Battlefield Theater, where visitors are placed on the Continental Army's front lines facing an attack by British soldiers; and a large-scale replica of an 18th-century privateer ship that visitors can board.

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## THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE *Continued*

### \* RECREATED HISTORICAL MOMENTS

More than 20 life-like figures appear individually or in historical vignettes, or tableaux, that recreate particular moments during the American Revolution. These tableaux personalize a diverse cast of characters who broaden visitors' view of the founding of the nation. These scenes include a brawl among Revolutionary soldiers broken up by George Washington in Harvard Yard; the statue of King George III as it is about to be torn down by an angry mob in New York City; artist Charles Willson Peale reuniting with his brother James on the banks of the Delaware River in December 1776; a view of Independence Hall in disarray during the British occupation of Philadelphia; a pair of Loyalist cavalry troopers in the South; and a conversation between enslaved Virginians and a black Loyalist soldier in 1781.

### \* DIGITAL INTERACTIVES

The Museum also uses interactive digital tools to engage visitors in the story of the American Revolution. Through a five-screen interactive digital wall, visitors can explore key moments in the decade following the Stamp Act, as well as five original broadsides that expressed colonists' opinions through images and the written word. A second installation explores 88 regional declarations of independence that were created prior to the federal one. Another interactive allows visitors to virtually handle weapons in order to learn more about their uses, owners, and makers. In another gallery, visitors explore the diverse experiences of enslaved Africans in Virginia in 1781 through an interactive touchscreen based on the lives of five men and women who followed different paths to seek freedom during the Revolutionary War.

### \* THEATER EXPERIENCES

Through numerous theater experiences throughout the Museum, visitors are swept up in the heart-pounding drama of the Revolution. During *Revolution*, an introductory film in the Museum's orientation theater, visitors encounter the breadth and complexity of the Revolution's causes, key moments, and ongoing impact and importance. The core exhibition experience begins with a short film about an angry mob tearing down the statue of King George III in New York City, immersing visitors in a scene of radical, rebellious action. In an immersive theater that recreates the feeling of Philadelphia's Independence Hall, visitors follow the unfolding debate

and decision-making – from their own Windsor chair – as delegates to the Continental Congress passionately debate whether to declare American independence. Another immersive theater puts visitors on the front lines of the Battle of Brandywine, with a rumbling floor, smoke effects, and the smell of gunpowder. Throughout the exhibition, object theater experiences delve deeply into the stories behind the artifacts on display.

### \* HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

In addition to digital installations, visitors have various opportunities to participate in the story throughout the core exhibition. Visitors can mix-and-match pieces of a soldier's uniform to learn about how soldiers displayed their loyalties; learn about the common soldiers and their families who endured the harsh winter at Valley Forge with flip-doors that explore the complex workings of a war camp; assume George Washington's role as President of the Constitutional Convention by sitting in a reproduction of the "Rising Sun" chair; and try their hand at an early American stitching lesson through an interactive sampler station in a gallery that explores the role mothers played in educating children as citizens.

### \* THE ONGOING LEGACY

The culminating experience of the core exhibition is the Legacy Theater, where visitors are invited to reflect on their richer understanding of the struggle to create the first modern democracy, and on the ongoing responsibility to perpetuate the ideals the nation was founded on. Visitors also encounter a display of photographs of 70 people who lived through the American Revolution and survived into the age of photography. These moving photographs offer an extraordinary opportunity to see the faces of the Revolutionary generation.

### \* WASHINGTON'S WAR TENT

A dedicated theater houses one of the most iconic surviving artifacts of the Revolution: General Washington's War Tent, which served as both his office and his sleeping quarters through much of the war. It was within the folds of this tent that key decisions were made that changed the course of history. The tent is presented as part of a multi-layered, mixed media presentation, followed by a dramatic reveal of the tent.