Supplying the Army

The Museum explores how a band of colonies outfitted an army and won independence. Waging war against Britain in 1775-1783 required thousands of soldiers and just as many muskets, canteens, coats, and shoes. Men and women who made supplies risked their lives and businesses to support the new United States. These individuals chose to face uncertain pay, threats from the British, and supply shortages to help the Revolution survive its darkest hour.

Support the war effort as you look for these American-manufactured items in the exhibits!

Preparing for Battle
To arm new revolutionary soldiers, American men and women rolled musket balls (cast from lead) and black powder into paper tubes called cartridges. With a box full of this ammunition, a soldier could fire three to four shots in a minute.

Arming the Cause
Philadelphia gunsmith Thomas Palmer produced muskets in a shop on Market Street between 4th and 5th. Just before the war, George Washington helped order a set of Palmer’s muskets for a Virginia militia company. This musket may be from that set of Philadelphia-made guns.

See reverse for more!
Look for these American-manufactured items in the exhibits!

**Melted Majesty**
After tearing down a statue of King George III in New York in 1776, revolutionary men and women melted down the lead and cast it into ammunition using bullet molds like the ones in this case. Bullets recently uncovered on the Monmouth battlefield in New Jersey appear to match the lead from that very statue. Look for more bullet molds in Arms of Independence.

**Revolutionary Banners**
As Americans looked for new symbols to represent a new country, they sometimes converted old and familiar ones, including British flags. A revolutionary reworked this flag, originally British, to include thirteen white stripes (six visible on this side): one stripe for each new state.

**Moving the Commander in Chief**
General George Washington travelled through the war with tents, furniture, dining equipment, and paperwork. A leatherworker made this portmanteau, which protected the sleeping tent that is exhibited in the Washington’s War Tent theater.

**On the March**
Americans carried canteens made from a variety of materials including tin and wood. Skilled coopers (barrel makers) crafted wooden canteens so precisely that they were watertight even without glue. Soldiers like Asaph Parmalee personalized their canteens by carving names and symbols into the sides.

**Wearing Your Allegiance on Your Sleeve**
British and American soldiers wore buttons that announced their loyalties. These examples, created by pouring molten pewter into special molds, were among the first objects marked with the initials of the new country: USA.

**Leaving Your Mark**
German immigrant Jacob Eckfelt made hundreds of bayonets for the Continental Army in his Philadelphia blacksmith shop on 5th Street. Using the touchscreen interactive, look for Eckfelt’s name marked on the blade of a bayonet.

**Making Sail**
Sailmakers like James Forten used specialized tools like these to convert imported hemp fabric into the sails that powered revolutionary ships. After the war, privateer veteran Forten apprenticed in a small Philadelphia sailmaking shop, saved enough money to purchase the business, and transformed it into an enormously successful enterprise.

**New Goods for Peacetime**
After the war, Americans beat their swords into plowshares and used military material for new purposes. Sergeant James Davenport’s family reworked red wool from a captured British soldier’s coat into this tiny pair of baby booties. The objects in this exhibit case all belonged to Davenport and his family.