

CREATING CONNECTIONS:
THE THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

The themes developed for the American Revolution Center at Valley Forge are designed to draw out the universal meanings and significances of the Revolution, and show how these can be read from the "stuff" of history.

The American Revolution Center has plenty of this "stuff" - a fabulous collection of objects and artifacts. But its location at Valley Forge offers even more - historic buildings, sites of fortifications, archaeology, and the very ground where a key moment of the Revolution took place, the very ground where George Washington and his troops endured hardship and hoped for victory, the very ground where men and women of all kinds had to make choices and take sides, and the very ground where the spirit of the Revolution lives on.

The themes will connect visitors to these tangible legacies from the past and help them to understand the intangible meanings they hold. The American Revolution Center at Valley Forge will unlock the door to an understanding of the hearts and minds of those past people, making their experiences relevant to us today.

The themes are set out below to show how themes applicable to the Revolution as a whole, will also apply to Valley Forge in particular, in the development of exhibits throughout Valley Forge NHP.

Overall learning outcome

The overall learning outcome of the American Revolution Center will be: -

Visitors will take away from this experience the understanding that the American Revolution is the single most important event in the history of the United States. They will also realize that the story of the Revolution is ongoing and relevant to America today. Visitors will want to continue to explore its history and its legacies.

Central theme

The central theme of the visitor experience at the American Revolution Center is:

As the story of the creation of the United States, the American Revolution embodies the values and ideals of the American people, but careful examination of the historical record reveals a rich story of people divided by geography, culture and class and torn by internal strife and uncertainty.

For Valley Forge

The 1777-1778 winter encampment at Valley Forge represents a microcosm of the American Revolution with its range of people and personalities and reflects the representative conflicts, complexities and contradictions of the American Revolution and the War for Independence.

After the encampment of 1777-1778, Valley Forge came to symbolize redemption through suffering by commemorating the sacrifice and hardship that characterized the early encampment period and evolved into a prime symbol of American ideals and identity. Its pastoral setting belies the complexities, contradictions and uncertainties of the Revolutionary period.

Supporting themes

The supporting themes for the experience are: -

- A. Motivations and decisions about involvement in the American Revolution and the War for Independence ranged from the ideals of the Enlightenment, loyalty, and religious conviction to practical issues such as daily survival, the promise of freedom and a secure economic future.

For Valley Forge

A spectrum of motivations and actions are reflected in the stories of the military and civilian participants of the Philadelphia Campaign and the Valley Forge encampment.

- B. As the War for Independence progressed, George Washington's strategy focused on maintaining the army and creating an effective fighting force able to challenge the most powerful military force in the world.

For Valley Forge

By placing the 1777-1778 winter encampment at Valley Forge, so close to the main British Army in Philadelphia, Commander-in-Chief General George Washington chose a strategic position enabling him to strike at the British and used the encampment to refine and reform the organizations and systems necessary to support and professionalize the Continental Army.

- C. More than any other factor, George Washington's leadership skills, political savvy and personal integrity may be credited for the cohesion of the army and ultimate victory of the American cause in the Revolution and the War for Independence.

For Valley Forge

At the Valley Forge encampment, George Washington, as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, faced severe challenges to his leadership and organization and, had assumed and retained the responsibility to hold the army together.

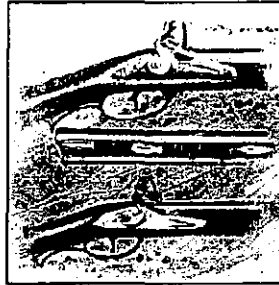
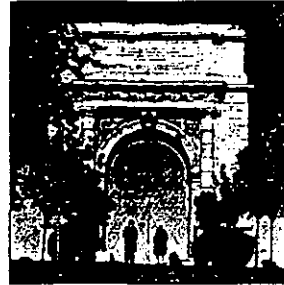
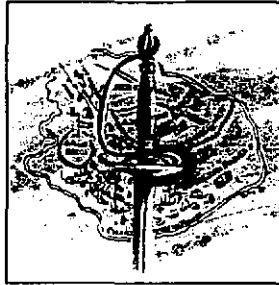
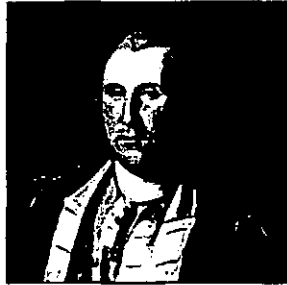
- D. The American Revolution is often considered an internal struggle of the British empire; but it was not only a civil war but also a war that triggered conflict on a global scale as power and influence shifted, new alliances were created and opportunities seized to even old scores.

For Valley Forge

The story of the Valley Forge encampment provides a window to the global scale and foreign involvement in the War for Independence through such factors as the French Alliance and the foreign volunteers and participants on both sides.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

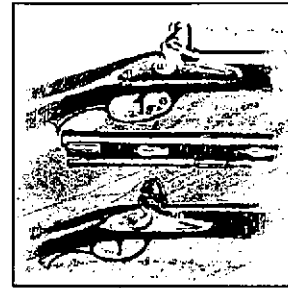
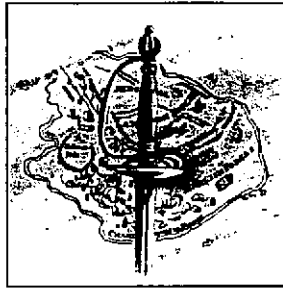
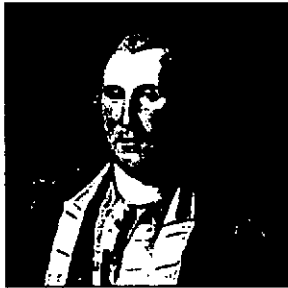
This document outlines the interpretive and exhibit design concepts for the new American Revolution Center at Valley Forge.

The American Revolution Center is a new museum and education center developed as a partnership between the National Center for the American Revolution and Valley Forge National Historical Park. The American Revolution Center will be a world-class museum facility and learning resource connected to a redeveloped visitor experience throughout Valley Forge National Historical Park.

The American Revolution Center will provide an innovative new gateway to Valley Forge and engage visitors in the whole powerful story of the American Revolution from its origins to its modern legacies. Valley Forge itself will engage visitors through National Historical Park and other revolutionary war sites exhibits and activities supporting its sense of place, as a real piece of that larger story. Here they can connect "on the ground" to the sometimes gritty, the sometimes awe-inspiring reality of the Revolution as it was lived.

Throughout this document the terms Center and Park are used as shorthand to denote the museum facility of the American Revolution Center and Valley Forge National Historical Park respectively.

A second and separate volume of Appendices accompanies this document. The Appendices detail the planning and development work undertaken by Haley Sharpe Design between August 2002 and February 2004 in the preparation of this Master Plan, including analysis of previous planning, site review, theme development, museum exhibit development, planning work for the visitor experience throughout Valley Forge NHP, work related to informing the architectural program and design for the Center, scheduling, and budget estimates.



VISION AND PRINCIPLES

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Vision statement

Sharing Freedom's Experiment

The American Revolution Center at Valley Forge will connect the history and legacy of the birth of the American republic to the concerns of the Twenty-First century. In a state of the art facility designed by the eminent architect, Robert A.M. Stern, the Center will showcase the largest collection of Revolutionary artifacts, information and experiences ever assembled. At least as important, the Center will be situated on the hallowed ground of Valley Forge.

The story of the American Revolution, with Valley Forge as its paradigm, provides a timeless example of what people can achieve when they unite in a common cause. The men and women of 1776 found such a cause in the world transforming words of the Declaration of Independence -- the universal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Located on the same ground where George Washington and his troops endured the harsh winter of 1777-78, The American Revolution Center will be a constant reminder of the sacrifices courageous men and women made to give contemporary Americans the rights and freedoms they enjoy today. The central theme of the Center will be the startling diversity of the 1776 Americans who struggled to win these inestimable rights -- white and black soldiers, caring, sometimes daring women, Irish, German, Jewish, Polish, French volunteers -- all shared the vision of a land of liberty and equality.

A recent National Assessment of Education Progress report card revealed that 57% of the nation's twelfth graders lack a basic knowledge of the American Revolution. In a turbulent world, the need to imprint and protect the nation's fundamental values grows more crucial with every passing day. A democratic society needs citizens with a broad understanding of the people, events, ideas and ideals that have shaped the nation.

One of the reasons for this shocking state of affairs is our failure to tell the defining epic of our history, the American Revolution, in a comprehensive way, using all the resources of modern technology. There is no museum of the American Revolution, equipped with the broadening intensifying potential of film, sound, and skilled design. The American Revolution Center at Valley Forge will remedy this potentially tragic spiritual and intellectual situation.

The mission of the American Revolution Center at Valley Forge is to educate, inform, and inspire the people of the United States and the international community about the soul-stirring events that took place during the American Revolution. To achieve this goal, the Center will bring to vivid life the men and women of diverse races and creeds who participated in these events and explore the ideas and ideals that motivated them. The legacy of these crucial years in the history of the nation will thus achieve a new birth in the hearts and minds of contemporary Americans.

Creating a Gateway to the Revolution

The American Revolution Center at Valley Forge will act as a Gateway to the Revolution. It is the literal gateway to Valley Forge National Historical Park - one of the iconic sites of the Revolution. It is a gateway to the world's largest collection of artifacts associated with the American Revolution. It is a gateway to a network of sites connected to the Revolution throughout the United States. Most importantly, it is a gateway to the imaginations of its visitors. Seizing these imaginations and drawing them into the story of the Revolution, thereby effecting a transformation in the hearts and minds of visitors, will be the crowning achievement of the American Revolution Center. Not only, therefore, will the center be the world's classroom on the Revolution, but it will also be the "go-to" place.

Embracing complexity

If the American Revolution tells us anything, it is that people, ideas, events - in short, human life - is complex. And it is dynamic, colorful, and astounding because of its complexity. On the one hand it is not a "sugar-coated" account of heroes. On the other hand it is not a story of unfulfilled promise. The American Revolution Center will distill the story of the American Revolution into a manageable draft for consumption, but it will not lose its subtle colors and flavors. To present the story as a black-and-white tale of good versus evil, right versus wrong, would not only be a disservice to the history, but a disservice to the visitor.

"The Revolution, like the whole of American history, is not a simple morality play; it is a complicated and often ironic story that needs to be explained and understood, not celebrated or condemned".

Gordon S. Wood. *The American Revolution: A History*

Everybody's Revolution

There is no 'right' way to tell the story. Historians would be out of business in there was such a 'right' way to tell it. And a selection of 'facts' is automatically contaminated by the selection process - a judgement has been made to leave some things out and emphasize other things.

Perhaps the only 'right' way to tell the story is, to acknowledge that there is no 'right' way to tell the story. Where controversy exists, it will be acknowledged. If the Center and the Park are to appeal to the world as the repository of the presentation and study of the Revolution, there must be room for many interpretations. The exhibits, therefore, need to strike a balance between, for example, "ideological" or "constitutional" strands of thought, "socioeconomic" views, and everything in between. The only way to avoid complete confusion for the visitor is to make it very clear that these different views exist, and to state clearly at key moments what these viewpoints are.

The American Revolution Center will acknowledge differences of opinion, and let the visitor make up their own mind. After all, the tension between opposing viewpoints is fundamental to the story being told. For example, the variety and breadth of the motivations of patriot soldiers reveals a very human picture of people caught up in momentous events.

In the presentation of the Revolution, therefore, we will also encourage visitors to recognize that there are many ways to tell the story from the perspective of the participants themselves. There will be narratives that include the original words of patriots of English, Irish, German, Spanish and Jewish descent, of loyalists, British politicians and soldiers, of American Indians, free and enslaved African Americans and Hessians and, of course of women throughout. The conflicts, contradictions and complexities in their stories will enhance a wider understanding of America's roots. They will also underscore a crucial point: it is everybody's revolution. Almost every American can find relevance - and pride - in the story.

How do we know?

To encourage people to explore the story of the Revolution further, and building on the sense of the American Revolution Center as the gateway to such further study, the visitor experience will also engage people with the process of how history is made. Evidence (documentary records, oral history, folklore, archaeology, objects, scientific analysis) will be used in interesting ways to illustrate issues, events, and personalities. In this way, contrasting points of view can be shown to have valid bases, through the use of and interpretation of such evidence.

This process is very relevant to many aspects of people's daily lives - the evaluation of "facts" such as those presented in news reports, the analysis of what people are really saying, the search for meaning and truth in general. By conveying how rich the seam of historical investigation is in this regard, the American Revolution Center can excite people in this very aptly democratic process of finding and voicing one's own thoughts and opinions through critical thinking.

The American Revolution Center will also use this approach to show visitors that it is often too easy to see past events as following an inexorable path. It is possible to see, from the words and deeds of those past actors in the drama, that they themselves did not know for certain the outcome of their actions.

Collections, collections, collections

Fundamental to the visitor's experience of the Revolution through this project is the way that they will be connected to the story through the objects from the stunning collections. These tangible links to past people, events and ideas provide a *frisson* of excitement, wonder and fascination. They also provide evidence, 'facts' which help us construct from the real object a sense of the real people and the real nature of events.

A sense of place

Locating the American Revolution Center at Valley Forge allows visitors to experience a unique sense of immersion in the story of the Revolution. Not only can they get close to the real objects of the Revolution, they can also experience one of its iconic real places. Valley Forge symbolizes both the spirit of the Patriot cause, and the enduring appeal of the Revolution in the definition of America and American identity. As such, there is no better place to engage visitors with the significance of the event.

Throughout the experience in both the Center and the Park, there are opportunities for reflection and contemplation. The landscape of Valley Forge in particular is evocative and provocative and forms a key part of the way visitors will connect to the story of the Revolution, both intellectually and emotionally.

The ongoing debate

The Revolution provides fertile ground for lively, fascinating and ongoing historical debate, and discussion about modern legacies and relevances. The American Revolution Center is also a gateway to understanding that the Revolution continues in the hearts and minds of the people of today.

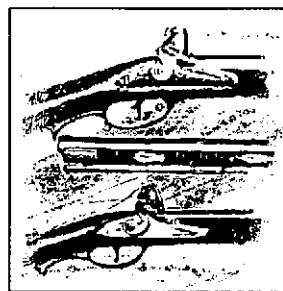
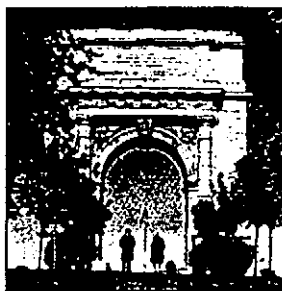
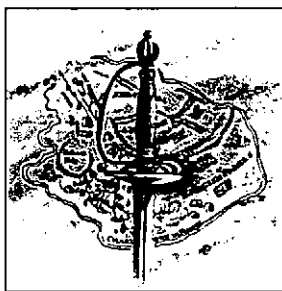
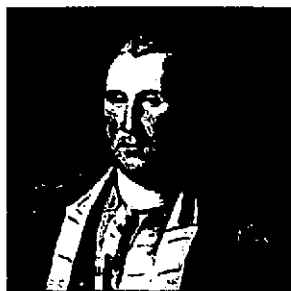
The educational role of the Center will be instrumental in fostering and stimulating interest in the revolution, from the elementary school student to the academic.

E. The American Revolution forged an American identity that united both individuals and states around the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence; this, despite the paradox and tension inherent in subordinating individual liberties and state interests to common goals and the common good.

For Valley Forge

Despite the inherent drama of deprivation, disagreement, intrigue over leadership, personal animosities, factions of despondency and pessimism as well as the uncertainty of the outcome, a stronger, more disciplined, organized and professional national army emerged from the Valley Forge encampment with a renewed sense of confidence and identity.

Despite the complexities of the encampment, the Valley Forge story has become symbolic shorthand for subsequent generations as they contributed to the evolving, pastoral landscape set aside to celebrate heroic suffering and sacrifice and to instill a sense of gratitude, inspiration and patriotism.



CREATING COHERENCE:
THE ORGANIZATION OF
THE EXHIBITS

CREATING COHERENCE: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EXHIBITS

Introduction

With such a huge subject as the American Revolution, careful consideration must be given to organizing the content and its presentation to allow visitors to digest the story. There is also a need for visitors, who have limited time and concentration spans, to structure their own visit to allow them to make informed choices about which exhibits to see, and which to save for another day.

Using a broad chronological structure

The Center experience is organized around a broad chronological framework. The story of the Revolution is divided into three obvious periods:

The Origins of the American Revolution	1760-1775
The Nature of the American Revolution	1775-1783
The Legacy of the American Revolution	1783-Present

Content of the chronological divisions

Within these broad chronological divisions, a number of goals, topics, issues and emphases have been defined for further development into detailed exhibit designs. These are described below.

The Origins of the American Revolution, 1760-1775

Purpose

Answer the questions: How did a population generally content to be British subjects move to a position where they were contemplating independence? What exactly were the would-be revolutionaries opposing, what were they proposing, and why?

Set the scene for the Revolution, and establish the context of the American colonies within the British social, political, cultural, and economic sphere and the Atlantic World in general. Includes life in the 18th century, relationships and communications between England and the colonies, the changes brought about by the French and Indian War, the growth of an "American" identity, and the rise of colonial protest and mutual hostility.

Content

- Examine the global context - where did the American colonies fit into the bigger picture of world powers and territories, and how was it connected to the rest of the world? Key aspects of this context are the global nature of slavery and the slave trade, the predominance of monarchy as the normal organizing structure for political entities, the exceptional and small nature of European republics, and the comparative meagreness of the American colonial population.
- At the same time sketch the local context - reminding visitors that they are near to where much of the action actually took place, and specifically at one of the turning point sites of the Revolution.

- Examine the political context, including the impact of the accession of George III on British politics and on the colonies. What seeds were sown by this - a monarch dedicated to personal rule, upsetting the traditional political order?. Also explore colonists' appeals to traditional English rights and liberties, not only in relation to political rights, but also in terms of economic justice. Explore relative relationship/loyalties of colonies to each other and to the Crown. Explore the nature of colonial government before the 1760s as much less tightly controlled - there had evolved a sense of self-determination within colonies, as local political institutions evolved with local direct "actual" representation - popular sovereignty was already differently conceived in the colonies to that in Britain.
- Examine the economic context, including the impact of the Seven Years War and the need to finance the war debt with taxation of colonists.
- Examine the social and cultural context, including the nature of traditional English society, and how it translated in the colonies. What were the senses of regional difference between the colonies, and how did these relate to an emerging "American" identity? Also the colonists' reactions to the highly provocative/symbolic maintenance of a standing army to police the frontiers.
- Trace the key events borne out of these contexts, that demonstrated, fuelled or shaped the growing sense of divergence and distrust between Great Britain and her American colonies. Emphasize the role of popular organization in protest action - although colonists resorted to traditional forms of protest, the "democratic" nature of protest groups, and appeal across regional boundaries was new.
- Throughout, examine the personal motives and viewpoints of a variety of individuals and groups that help explain the difficult decisions and complex pressures and counterpressures involved in a process of beginning to "take sides" (including those people indifferent, neutral, or without a choice in this process). Not everyone demanded political change, not everyone was affected by British taxation, not everyone felt "American".

Key topics

- The introduction of the Stamp Act and the reaction to it, 1765
- The Boston Massacre, 1770
- The Boston Tea Party, 1773
- The Coercive Acts, 1774
- The First Continental Congress, 1774
- Lexington and Concord, 1775

Key learning outcome

- Understand the global context in which the Revolution occurred, the interconnectedness of events and decisions in England and the American colonies, that the Revolution itself was the result of long years of increasing tension, and that there were many and varied motives in the taking (or not) of sides.

The Nature of the American Revolution, 1775-1783

Purpose

Answer the question: how and why did the Revolution begin, and what happened?

Content

- The Revolution is explained as arising from a multiplicity of factors, effecting a change in the political order, with huge social and economic impacts. Explain the distinctions between the terms "the Revolution" and the "War for Independence". The War itself was part of the Revolution - the means by which the change was secured - but was not an end in itself. However, the War shaped the aspirations and ultimate outcomes of the Revolution. It is explained that there are many ways of looking at the factors determining the Revolution's course and its outcomes.
- The theme takes as its starting point the Battle of Breed's Hill in 1775, and climaxes with George Washington's abdication of his position as Commander-in-Chief in 1783. The shaping of the Revolution and the conduct of the War are interwoven, with major emphases on the Declaration of Independence; the global nature of the war; and the role of popular mobilization (including the Congress, the militias, the Continental Army, and the many local and often individual acts of participation which all shaped events).
- The debate about independence is examined, including in its justification, the contentious issue of slavery. The formulation and issuing of the Declaration of Independence forms a key highlight of this theme and raises questions of whose ideals this document expressed, and what those ideals meant to a diverse population.
- A sense of context is created - a relatively small population in a huge territory, and the 'preposterousness' of going to war with the British Empire. The war should be noted as long and painful, with the alliance with France a pivotal point, and characterized by the formation of distinctive relationships between the civil and military spheres. The role of George Washington is examined in particular as the embodiment of both the republican ideal of virtue and selfless public service, and the need for military action and pragmatism 'on the ground' - the 'bridge' between the sovereign power of the people and the people's army, between civilian control and military implementation. His abdication of power at the war's end made him 'the greatest man in the world', according to none other than George III.
- The importance of leadership and strategy in the war is examined, and the nature of the conflict - both the major battles and the minor skirmishes. Washington's strategy of maintaining a constant presence "to look the enemy in the face", to harass, and to "protract the war", rather than to defend territory is explored, as are the problems facing both sides in terms of supply, popular support, morale, and logistics.
- The wide extent of the war globally, on the frontiers, and at sea are also tackled.
- The experience and contribution to the course of events of civilians and ordinary soldiers.

Key topics

- Appointment of George Washington as C-in-C and formation of a Continental Army
- Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775
- The Siege of Quebec, 1775
- The Second Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence, 1776
- The Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 1776
- The Philadelphia Campaign 1777
- Battle of Saratoga, 1777
- Valley Forge, 1777-78
- The French Alliance, 1778
- Battle of Monmouth, 1778
- The War at Sea
- The Frontier War
- The Home Front
- State constitutions
- New Jersey as "cockpit state"
- Southern Campaigns 1778-81
- Battle of Yorktown, 1781
- Peace of Paris, 1783
- George Washington's abdication of power, 1783

Key learning outcome

- Understand the Revolution as a complex process of upheaval, that led to and was shaped by warfare. Understand that there was a complexity of motivations for taking sides, changing sides, or trying to keep out of the struggle, and that these motivations were a mix of personal and collective goals.

The Legacy of the American Revolution, 1783-Present

Purpose

Answer the question: what did the Revolution mean in the immediate aftermath of military victory, and what were the longer ramifications?

Examine the immediate after-effects of the war, the process by which the United States was founded on a permanent constitutional footing, and the longer term legacies at home and abroad.

Content

- Explore the aftermath of the Revolution as Americans struggled to govern themselves under the Articles of Confederation. Examine the Confederation Congress, notably the Northwest Ordinance, which barred slavery from the states that became the Midwest. The impacts of the war are examined: social and economic, political, the expansion of westward settlement, the impact on Native American populations, the consequences for enslaved African Americans, and for women, the effects on religion (especially the enshrining of the separation of church and state).
- Explore the making of the US Constitution in outline, ending with the inauguration of Washington as President in 1789, with a coda on the Bill of Rights in 1790. The key component is the juggling of tensions between the inherent contradiction of the Revolution of the ideals of Republican virtue on the one hand, and the realities of human nature on the other, of the social realities of benevolence and selflessness vs. social competitiveness and individualism. What 'unfinished business' (such as slavery) did this process leave and why?
- Also examine how key figures in the Revolution went on to become major political figures in the new Republic (such as the officers around George Washington).
- We will also explore the legacy of the Revolution by comparing it to French, South American and other revolutions that came later. Explore why the United States is the oldest surviving republic in the world, and why it is the only republic of scale since Rome to endure for any length.
- We also examine the Revolution in the shaping of American identity and consciousness. Examine the symbolism and myth that has grown up around the Revolution as an expression of the search for national identity, and as an important part of the legacy. Also examine how views of the Revolution have changed over time. This includes a discussion of how the Declaration of Independence has become a profound expression of American national identity. Valley Forge forms a key component of this examination, and looking at how the site became a "sacred place" will help visitors understand how the Revolution has touched the American people through the years.

Key Topics

- State constitutions
- The Philadelphia Convention & The Constitution
- The Bill of Rights
- The Slavery Question
- The Federalist-Anti-Federalist Debate
- The Frontier & The Northwest Ordinance
- Winners and Losers
- Effects of the War

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- Effects of the Revolution
 - Republican Reforms
 - Antislavery
 - Republican Religion
 - Revolutionary Citizens
 - George Washington as first President
 - George Washington: Man and Myth
 - The French Revolution
 - Valley Forge: the Making and Remaking of a National Symbol
 - Origins of the Valley Forge Legend
 - Creating the Park
 - Valley Forge and National Identity
 - Valley Forge and National Crisis
 - Representations of Valley Forge
 - George Washington and Valley Forge
 - Interpreting and Using the Revolution

Key learning outcomes

- Visitors will understand that the Revolution was not over when the war ended. There was a process of working out what the gains of the peace meant for the newly independent states.
- Visitors will understand the main effects of the Revolution and the war on people's lives.
- Visitors will understand that the Constitution is the foundation of the American republic, and was a careful balancing act, attempting to preserve the ideals of the Revolution while accommodating the realities of creating a political union of states.
- Visitors will understand that the Revolution did not occur in a vacuum and had huge consequences far beyond the shores of America, as it still does.
- Visitors will understand what its legacies are within the United States, and be able to use some of this material to form a personal and individual sense of the significance and relevance of the Revolution.
- Visitors will understand the nature of Valley Forge as a cherished national symbol.

Exhibit layers and structure

Dividing the content

Each broad chronological period will form the basis for a major exhibit gallery or "Exhibit Zone" within the Center building. Within each Exhibit Zone the material will be organized into four kinds of exhibit areas which will overlap in some places. These areas are: -

- A general introduction to the Exhibit Zone which conveys the main messages and gives an overview of the chronology of events to be explored within.
- **What happened?** An area which fleshes out in detail the nature and sequence of events in this period, touching in overview on the key personalities and groups involved and the meanings and ideas raised.
- **Who was involved?** An area which examines in detail the diverse personalities and groups of people, perspectives and experiences connected to the events in this period.
- **What did it mean?** An area which examines in depth the ideas and significances arising from the events in this period.

A hierarchy of exhibits

The exhibits are structured on a logical framework to create a hierarchy which is both an aid to the effective organization of story content, and also an aid to the visitor. Visitors can see very clearly at first glance which messages are the most important, which stories are more prominent and where to find more detailed information should they desire it.

The exhibits are created so that they form the building blocks of the main messages of the whole Zone.

Components

Each individual exhibit, whether a single case of objects, a text panel, or a video presentation is a component, and will usually support a sub-topic.

Pods

Several components grouped together in an area form a "pod" and will collectively support a small topic.

Clusters

Several pods grouped together in an area form a "cluster" which collectively support a large topic or a subdivision of the chronology of the story.

Zones

All the exhibits collectively form the content of a whole Zone.

Layers, levels, and accessibility

The exhibits appeal to a wide range of audiences. There are exhibits which are layered, so that the visitor can explore the information they contain in increasing depth depending on their own inclinations, abilities or available time.

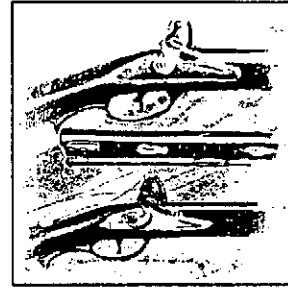
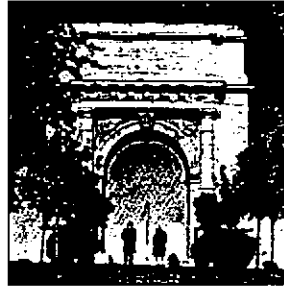
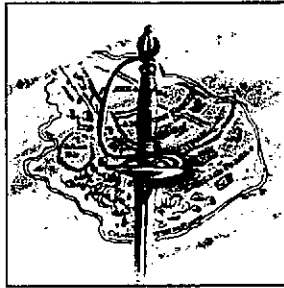
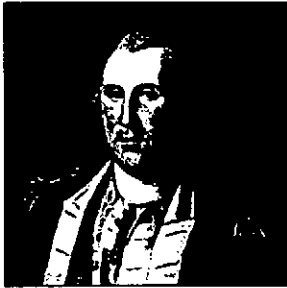
There are also targeted exhibits which address particular constituencies of the audience - toddlers and older children.

All exhibits are made as accessible as possible to visitors with hearing, sight or physical impairments.

Exhibit design language

The exhibit designs follow some key principles:

- A clean, modern aesthetic, drawing inspiration from the ideas of "transparency" and layering. The exhibit design approach will reflect the ideas and issues under discussion in the visitor experience - the many-layered nature of the story, the democratic nature of the popular participation in the Revolution, and the opening up of this story to modern visitors through accessible and engaging exhibits.
- A use of materials which harmonizes with the architectural concept. The architecture is an organic form which melds with the landscape. In the same way, the exhibit design is integral to the building and forms a harmonious whole.
- The creation of atmospheric, dynamic, and dramatic spaces. The story being presented is a human drama, and the spaces in which it is experienced will enhance that sense of suspense, tension, mystery, desperation, tragedy, endurance, and perseverance.
- The centrality of the collections in illustrating the story. Objects are presented so that they have context and meaning, and do not simply float as abstract things in space. They are housed to the highest conservation standards, and are creatively positioned, lit and labelled, so that they resonate with meaning for visitors.



CREATING ENGAGEMENT: THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Introduction

With change accelerating all around, more and more we need understanding and appreciation of those principles upon which the republic was founded. What were those "self-evident" truths that so many risked all for, fought for, suffered and died for? What was the source of their courage? Who were those people? I don't think we can ever know enough about them.

David McCullough, author of *John Adams*, 2001

O! Ye unborn Inhabitants of America! Should this Page escape its desired Conflagration at the year's End, and these Alphabetical Letters remain legible, - when your Eyes behold the Sun after he has rolled the Seasons round for two Centuries more, you will know that we dream'd of your Times.

Nathaniel Ames, almanac author from Dedham, Mass., 1776

The essence of the visitor experience at the American Revolution Center and throughout Valley Forge National Historical Park has two major threads. One thread will help visitors to understand the people who created, got caught up in, and were changed by the events of the American Revolution in the second half of the 18th century.

The other thread will help visitors to explore what the American Revolution means to them, personally and collectively, now at the start of the 21st century. When visitors hear the voices of those people of over 200 years ago – their fears and hopes, struggles and dreams, daily lives and ambitious ideals – they will not escape the feeling that this is an ongoing conversation across the centuries. The people of the Revolution speak to us still, and we, as inheritors of their legacy, should keep talking.

In this way, the American Revolution Center at Valley Forge will effect a perhaps slow, perhaps subtle, perhaps small, but nevertheless significant transformation in the hearts and minds of visitors. This is Everyone's Revolution, and everyone will take something from their experience – a desire to explore further how the Revolution transformed America, and how they, as citizens, continue to shape it.

The catalyst of this transformational experience will be how the interpretive exhibits and programs present the magnificent collections of the American Revolution Center. These objects are the three-dimensional, tangible links to the people of the Revolution. These objects allow us to get as close as possible to the physical presence of the ghosts of the past – whether General George Washington's campaign tent or Private Jabez Rockwell's powder horn. Their hearts, their minds were bound up with these objects and the American Revolution Center will unlock those hidden meanings for the visiting public.

Overview of visitor flow and circulation

Visitors will begin their experience to the whole site at the visitor facility building of the American Revolution Center. Here they will explore the whole story of the Revolution, and find orientation information and an overview for experiences in Valley Forge National Historical Park. Here they also find visitor facilities, refreshments, dining, and a shop. After their Center visit, visitors explore the many experiences and exhibits in Valley Forge National Historical Park, returning to the Center for further exploration of the exhibits there, further refreshment, or a final visit to the shop.

The visitor flow through the Center building follows a recommended but not mandatory sequence described in detail below. In summary, the sequence is:

1. Orientation
2. Ticketing
3. Great Hall
4. The Theater of the Revolution (introductory experience)
5. Exhibit Zone 1: Origins, 1760-1775
6. Exhibit Zone 2: Revolution, 1775-1783
7. Exhibit Zone 3: Legacy, 1783-Present
8. Conclusion Zone
9. Viewing Platform
10. Continue visit around Valley Forge NHP

Circulation through the building is designed to allow visitors flexibility in how they want to structure their experience. Each element or zone of the main visitor experience can be accessed separately, without having to progress through the previous zone. However, visitors will gain most from their experience if they follow the recommended sequence.

In particular, following the sequence will allow visitors to follow throughout the unfolding historical drama the experiences of a number of individuals – real people, whose stories have been left to us through documents, objects, pictures, places, and memories. These stories will provide one major thread for visitors. The other major thread is the way that visitors themselves react, and visitors will be able to record their own opinions, and gather their own favorite stories, as they explore the exhibits.

Approaching the building entrance

Content and intent

- Provides the initial interpretive contact with visitors
- Conveys impressions and subtle messages through architecture and exterior exhibits

Media and atmosphere

Visitors approach the entrance to the Center building from the parking lot up a ramped stairway, rising against the face of a low cliff. This dramatic beginning to the approach to the building is supported in interpretive terms by a series of thought-provoking historical quotations integrated into the stairway. These set the tone for the visitor experience, anchoring the visit to the ideas of immersion in the 18th-century context, the importance of connecting to the people of the Revolution, and the way that the players in the drama of the Revolution can still speak to us from their own time, with their own words, in their own voices.

On reaching the plaza of the building, visitors begin to understand the beautiful way that the building nestles in the landscape of the site, echoing the way that the story of the Revolution is embedded here at Valley Forge in the very earth. It is embedded metaphorically in the sense that George Washington and others enacted events on this ground integral to the outcome of the Revolution, and embedded physically in the way that he and the thousands of troops and camp followers who wintered here left their presence in the archaeological record and in the features of the landscape.

Entry and first impressions

Content and intent

- Provides a sense of arrival and welcome
- Introduces an architectural and design statement that creates an immediate impact and subtly reflects the themes and meanings of the Revolution
- Provides gathering space
- Provides a circulation/access space to visitor facilities and to the start of the interpretive experience

Media and atmosphere

As visitors enter the Center facility they find themselves in an impressive lobby area and circulation space, designed to support the most efficient handling of the practicalities of arrival, as well as to create a sense of anticipation for the experience to come.

From this lobby space, visitors can clearly see the ticketing desks, orientation exhibit, the shop, and directions to restrooms, coat check, buggy park, refreshments, temporary exhibition gallery, main exhibition galleries, and the exit to the Park.

They are immediately struck by the sense of space above them. Their eyes are drawn to the views up into the Great Hall on the floor above, where the main interpretive experience begins. They can also see the ramped stairway leading up to the Hall, and the beginnings of an illustrated timeline, which invites them on the "Road to Revolution". The transparency of the space, the invitational nature of the architecture and the start of the exhibit experience underscore the central ideas of the story of the Revolution – multiple layers of meaning, an accessible story open and significant to all, and the emergence of new principles of freedom and democracy.

Visitors also see the orientation exhibit area described below.

Orientation exhibit area

Content and intent

- Provides a general information point
- Provides orientation to explain the Center facility and the experience throughout the whole Park
- Presents "teaser" exhibits for the Center
- Provides an introduction and overview for the Valley Forge story and Park resources
- Provides information on daily events and programs
- Provides an absorbing waiting area for visitors, whose other party members are obtaining tickets, checking coats, visiting the restrooms, etc.

Media and atmosphere

This is a dynamic exhibit area, providing all kinds of orientation information, to the Center and Park, together with an overview of the history and resources of Valley Forge. This area is free to all visitors. Here, visitors can plan their day at the American Revolution Center and throughout Valley Forge National Historical Park. An interactive model of the site helps them to do this, as do computer touchscreens, containing previews of activities and programs, together with a daily schedule for these. A member of staff is on hand to answer queries, hand out orientation brochures, and make recommendations for visitor itineraries. Regular Park users, such as joggers and cyclists, can pick up trail brochures, some linked to subjects of special interest.

An introductory video presentation draws visitors into the fascinating history of the Valley Forge encampment, and the many resources of the site. Visitors are in no doubt that learning about the Revolution and its legacies here, at the American Revolution Center and Valley Forge, is going to be infinitely more rewarding and special, than it could be anywhere else. Not only are they about to get close to the most comprehensive and amazing collection of objects and artifacts from the Revolution in the world, but they are going to experience a real piece of history "on the ground". By experiencing the whole site of Valley Forge, they will be connecting to, walking on, breathing in, the very place where George Washington, Baron von Steuben, the Marquis de Lafayette, Joseph Plumb Martin and thousands of Patriot troops and camp followers made history.

To support this presentation, some of the artifacts related to Valley Forge will be displayed here, and visitors can explore a computer database of soldiers present at Valley Forge. This "Muster Roll" database allows visitors to find members of their own family who may have been a direct part of the history of the Revolution.

Ticketing

Content and intent

- Provides a quick and efficient ticketing operation
- Offers a number of different ticketing packages
- Provides visitors with interpretive "tools" for their visit

Media and atmosphere

The ticketing operation uses the latest technology to offer visitors great flexibility and choice in the type and combination of experience options they wish to purchase. Here visitors also receive their timed ticket for the "Theater of the Revolution" experience.

They also receive here supporting personal interpretive devices which will enhance their experience. Visitors pick up personal audio guides here, which will form part of their interpretive visit both through the Center and the Park. These audio guides allow visitors to experience the personal stories of the people of the Revolution, through the voices of actors. These dramatic episodes link to specific exhibits as visitors tour the Center and the Park, bringing to life in a direct personal way the story of the Revolution. In addition, visitors also receive here their individual smart-technology buttons. These "Smart Buttons" store information digitally. They are used by visitors to gather information from the exhibits, and to interact with the exhibits, as is explained in more detail under the Exhibit Zones section below. The buttons are modeled on the uniform buttons of the Continental Army, bearing the legend "USA". These buttons were some of the first symbols of the self-declared independent United States of America, examples of which are in the collections.

Temporary exhibition gallery

Content and intent

- Provides a flexible and separate gallery space to present temporary or traveling exhibits

Media and atmosphere

The temporary exhibition gallery is accessible from the entry lobby space and will run a program of diverse and fascinating temporary exhibitions, which range from focus exhibits drawing on the massive collections of the American Revolution Center, to Revolution exhibits developed with partner organizations, to the work of artists inspired by Valley Forge.

Road to Revolution

Content and intent

- Provides the starting point for visitors' main interpretive experience in the Center.
- Begins a timeline which visitors can follow throughout the Center

Media and atmosphere

Once visitors are ticketed, they begin their journey here. They ascend a ramped stairway up to the second floor of the building and into the Great Hall. As they do so, they follow a timeline trail integrated into the stairway, which sets the overall historical context for the story to come. This trail starts with an overview of how America began, how it was colonized and how the thirteen English colonies developed. By the time visitors reach the Hall, the trail has brought them to the year 1760. The trail is linked to bold overhead imagery. The trail continues throughout the Great Hall and up onto the second floor of the building, highlighting with objects, images, quotations and sounds key events from 1760 to 1783.

Great Hall

Content and intent

- Provide a central "hub" space for visitors to orient and re-orient themselves between Exhibit Zones and other facilities
- Create a fitting place to commemorate people in the Revolution of all types, and to honor the memory of all those who died as a result of the conflict
- Provide a continuation of the overview timeline
- Provide space to absorb people waiting for entry to the "Theater of the Revolution"

Media and atmosphere

The Great Hall is a central circulation space which provides a hub for free-flow access to the three main Exhibit Zones, to the exit to the site, to the viewing platform/area, to the auditorium, to other facilities such as restrooms, refreshments, etc. and, to the "Theater of the Revolution" show. There is continuation of the timeline here, an overall chronological overview of the Revolution around this central space.

The space is light, airy and dramatic, and visitors are immediately struck by the views out toward the landscape, down over the entrance plaza, and overlooking the entrance lobby. Again, the theme of transparency and layering is picked up, to reflect the layers and accessibility of the story. The timeline exhibitry here is a multimedia sequence incorporating graphic elements, audio-visual screens and sculptural features. There are also commemorative exhibits which highlight individual participants in the story of the Revolution, demonstrating a wide range of the diverse peoples involved, from military leaders such as Pennsylvania's own Anthony Wayne to heroines on the front line such as Molly Pitcher, from Patriot allies such as Oneida chief Skenandoah to unsung Patriot heroes, such as the African American Rhode Island Regiment. Chief among these, visitors come face to face with a statue of George Washington, a copy after a piece by the sculptor Houdon. This is an apt reminder of both the human scale of the drama to unfold, and of the imposing physical and symbolic "stature" of this towering figure of the Revolution.

The "Theater of the Revolution"

[You are] actors upon that glorious stage, where every incident is to become historical fact.

General Robert Howe, addressing officers of the Continental Army, February 1777

History is the record of an encounter between character and circumstance the encounter between character and circumstance is essentially a story.

Donald G. Creighton

What began as a colonial rebellion on the very edges of the civilized world was transformed into an earth-shaking event – an event that promised, as one clergyman declared, to create out of the 'perishing World . . . a new World, a young World, a World of countless millions, all in the fair Bloom of Piety'.

Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History*

Content and intent

- Introduce visitors to the drama of the Revolution through an unforgettable theatrical experience
- Immerse visitors in the context of the 18th century
- Provide a flexible space which can run a variety of theatrically-based programs and presentations

A well-used and effective approach to interpreting a museum subject which has a strong narrative thread is to give visitors an overview of the story before they explore its many aspects in more detail.

This option for such an overview presented here is based on the idea of introducing visitors to the context and outline of the story of the Revolution through a familiar storytelling framework – that of theater. The use of the theater motif is designed to work on several levels.

Firstly, it provides an appropriate and understandable medium through which to tell a story, reinforcing the idea that the Revolution, and the way visitors are going to experience it, is not a dry collection of old things and dead people's pictures – instead it is a vivid, living human drama.

Secondly, the theater concept is appropriate to the context of the period, plays providing nodes of political debate and thought at the time – George Washington's staging of Addison's "Cato" for the troops at Valley Forge springs to mind. It is also a metaphor appropriate to this period, echoing Shakespeare's line that "all the world's a stage", and Washington himself uses the concept to describe his vision for the future of the American republican experiment:

The Citizens of America . . . are, from this period, to be considered as Actors on a most conspicuous Theater, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence for the display of human greatness and felicity.

George Washington, Circular Letter, 1783

Thirdly, the theater concept gives a colorful sense of period allowing visitors to see continuities, but also highly contrasting changes between the present and the past.

Fourthly, the concept is useful in focusing visitors' attention on the human activity which goes on in the environment and the story, rather than the details of the structure around it. It provides a certain useful latitude in representing the past, allowing evocations of past times to be conjured, without the necessity for complete and exhaustive reconstructed environments.

Fifthly, there can be much productive interplay between deliberately 'theatrical' and representative, often literally 'two-dimensional', backdrops, and the very real three-dimensions of live performers and interpreters who relate to visitors in front of them. It is a way of emphasizing the human scale and engine of the story, and that the material world (settings, places, collections) are avenues through which we reach a deeper understanding of past people, but not an end in themselves.

Sixthly, the theater framework allows the suspension of disbelief in a familiar format, where the audience can accept meeting characters who are people from the past, while simultaneously knowing that they are actors/interpreters.

Media and atmosphere

Visitors enter an auditorium-type space and are seated in rows facing a small stage. The surroundings appear simple, contemporary, and resemble a lecture theater. The lights dim and a figure appears center stage, starkly spotlighted. He is dressed in modern clothes and begins to speak. He welcomes the audience, explaining that he is the master of ceremonies, and announces that they are about to explore an extraordinary story, a story which is still being played out, but without which America would not be what it is today. He points out the modern legacies of this story, and as he does so, images flash up around the room – the Capitol in Washington DC, the Whitehouse, the Stars and Stripes, voting booths, the pledge of allegiance, and so on.

Now, he explains that this story began in the middle of the 18th century. As he speaks, as if from afar, the sound of music is heard, slowly getting louder. It is chamber music. At the same time, visitors suddenly begin to notice that the apparently plain and modern surroundings of the auditorium are transforming themselves. Screens descend around the walls, across the ceiling, and down the back of and on the flanks of the stage. On the screens begin to materialize the impression of an 18th-century theater, drawing on the engraving styles of the 18th-century caricaturists and artists William Hogarth and James Gillray.

Visitors now find themselves immersed in what was one of the main arenas for political expression, debate, and popular protest of the 18th century – the theater. They are also somewhere that helped shape the ideas and beliefs of a generation of leaders such as George Washington. Indeed, George Washington's favorite play, "Cato" by Joseph Addison, described the great noble ideals of his hero, the Roman general Cato, ideals which Washington tried to follow throughout his life. And visitors are also somewhere where the fundamental human drama of the Revolution can be emphasized and where it can touch them in a direct, personal, living way.

The master of ceremonies has transformed too – gone are the modern clothes. He now stands before the audience in the finery of an 18th-century gentleman.

He now turns to setting the scene for the story of the Revolution and introduces some of the key characters. He explains that we are about to explore how it was that America threw off its colonial master, established its independence, and embarked on this extraordinary experiment in the creation of a new society.

Our host takes us on a journey to explain a sense of the world in the 1760s, socially, politically, and geographically. A centerpiece of this is a literal look at the world of the time. As the lights dim further, the central roundel of the theater's plasterwork ceiling begins to move. It descends, revealing itself in fact to be a complete globe. As our host explains the world, the globe rotates and key areas are highlighted with spotlights. Simultaneously, the side panels of the proscenium arch of the stage, which appear to be painted with scenes in the 18th-century manner, come to life with animated and filmed sequences to support the host's narrative. In this way we can see the King in Parliament, British empire-building in India, the triangular slave trade route, and the nature of the French and Indian War.

Our host sketches the main issues and tensions which are besetting the American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s, illustrated with the animated side panels, with changing scenes and events which slide on from stage left and right as cut-outs (as in an 18th-century toy theater), and with interactions from the 'audience' – characters seated in the boxes to left and right, who help to establish a variety of perspectives and opinions on what is happening. Our host establishes that this is a story with many layers and depths, and about which people disagree and differ. He offers that going 'behind the scenes' may help visitors gain a better understanding of the issues. As a climax to this presentation, our host is interrupted by the arrival of Paul Revere, perhaps as a cut-out figure emerging from the side of the stage. This is the gripping prelude to open conflict, which will form the next section of the experience.

Now the pivotal events at Lexington and Concord are sketched in a dramatic fashion. The shadows of British troops and minutemen loom across the theater, as the confusion and tension of the moment builds.

A shot is heard ("the shot that echoed round the world") and smoke billows from the back of the stage. At this moment the proscenium arch cracks open and splits aside in an exhilarating 'coup de theatre' moment.

From the smoke, which is backlit now, a figure emerges – a militia man. He breathlessly tells the audience about the events that have occurred at Lexington and Concord. He is returning along the road back to Boston, as part of the militia group now harrassing the British. Now, he invites the audience into the story, to explore in more detail how things have come to this and how they will unfold. Visitors leave their seats and follow him through the back of the now split-apart scenery. They are now immersed in the Revolution.

Through the stage, visitors enter the first of the Exhibit Zones.

The Exhibit Zones

Content and intent

- These are the main areas of the visitor experience in the Center
- There are three main Zones, each dealing with a section of chronology, and sub-divided into topic areas:
- Exhibit Zone 1: Origins, 1760-1775
- Exhibit Zone 2: Revolution, 1775-1783
- Exhibit Zone 3: Legacy, 1783-Present
- An introductory audio-visual 'hub' for each Zone conveys the overview of the content of that Zone, highlighting the key events, issues and people that visitors will explore further in the rest of the exhibits.
- These further exhibits provide a wide range of interpretive experiences to engage visitors in all aspects of the unfolding story of the Revolution.
- Chief among the media used are the stunning collections of objects and artifacts, which illustrate each topic, but there are also mechanical and computer-based interactives, participatory programs, immersive experiences, and study materials.
- Visitors are encouraged to see these Zones in chronological sequence, but there is plenty of flexibility to allow an individual visitor to structure their own visit and choose the topics of most personal interest
- Each Zone contains a flexible Interpretive Program Area, where interpreters involve visitors in participatory activities and presentations.
- Each Zone contains Interactive Learning Areas, which are designed specifically to encourage family and other group interaction, through hands-on activities such as dressing up, puzzle-solving, replica object handling, and games of strategy.
- Each Zone contains quieter Study Areas, where more detailed information can be accessed on topics of particular interest to individual visitors.

Media and atmosphere

The three main Exhibit Zones have separate entrances off the central circulation space, and Zone 1 is also accessed directly from the Theater of the Revolution. Each zone has an introductory hub followed by three distinct areas. There is free-flow circulation in and around the hub and between the three areas within each zone. The structure is based on a mix of the chronological and thematic approaches. The overview chronology for each Zone is presented in the introductory hub for each Zone. The Zones are subdivided into broad areas: What Happened?; Who Was Involved?; and What Did it Mean?. Within each of these areas there are a series of topics to explore.

There is a very wide range of interpretive media deployed. Objects and artifacts from the world-class collections illustrate the story and furnish part of the evidence for how we know what we know about the Revolution and for differing perspectives and opinions about it. Further evidence is supplied by quotations from contemporary documents, and by examination of surviving historic places such as Valley Forge, where archaeology, historic buildings and landforms all help us to piece together the nature of past events and past lives. In the "What did it mean?" sections, abstract ideas can also be explained through objects, and a focus is thrown back on the real value of the collections as both tangible links to the past and symbolic and iconic items.

Throughout the exhibits, visitors can use their "Smart Buttons" to interact with the exhibits. They log into exhibit stations and download information, games, quizzes, images, and video sequences into their own personalized Revolution Files. They can email these files home to themselves, or get print-outs of parts of their file in the Conclusion Zone. Visitors can also store their scores and results from interactive exhibits using their Smart Buttons, so that when they return on a later visit, they can see if they can improve these scores. The exhibits themselves will "talk back" to visitors, welcoming them by name and suggesting things that they might like to explore or exhibits that they have not yet visited.

The Interpretive Program Areas are settings and opportunities for in-gallery programs which support and relate to surrounding exhibit areas. These include:

- "Eyewitness" accounts, where costumed interpreters in historical character relate their perspectives on an event, using original source material as the basis for their dramatizations.
- "How do we know?" talks, where interpreters take a look from a modern perspective at the kinds of evidence we have for constructing a version of a particular event or personality.
- "Votes & Proceedings" programs where the audience is invited to participate in a debate on an issue from the Revolution, and on its modern ramifications.
- "A Revolution for All Time" presentations, in which one interpreter in historical character from the Revolutionary period discusses the impact of the Revolution with another interpreter in historical character from a later period, such as the Civil War of the 1860s or the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s-60s.
- "Wanted!" programs, which invite visitors to take part in a variety of activities, such as learning a soldier's arms drill and basic manoeuvres.

The Interactive Learning Areas contain self-directed activities which allow visitors in individually or in small groups to solve puzzles, create, or play. There is a range of interactive exhibits to suit all ages and levels of interest, including:

- Have a go at writing in the 18th-century style with a quill pen.
- Design your own broadsheet attacking or defending the Stamp Act
- Put together the pieces of a replica 18th-century musket
- Build a model log hut
- Try on a tricorn hat, a British Grenadier's headgear, or a Hessian helmet

The Study Areas contain a host of study aids which can be accessed at many different levels of ability and interest on a wide variety of topics. Information from many of these study media can be downloaded into visitors' personal Revolution Files, and include:

- A mini-library of reference books and picture books
- Computer databases of the object collections and virtual versions of key documents
- Computer links to key websites, such as the Library of Congress

Exhibit Zone 1: Origins, 1760-1775

When I consider the extream [sic] corruption prevalent among all orders of men in this old rotten State [Britain], and the glorious publick [sic] virtue so predominant in our rising country, I cannot but apprehend more mischief than benefit from a closer union . . . However, I would try any thing, and bear any thing that can be borne with safety to our just liberties, rather than engage in a war with such near relations, unless compelled to it by a dire necessity in our own defence . . .

Benjamin Franklin, writing from London, February 1775.

What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people . . .

John Adams, 1815

Content and intent

- Presentation of the story between 1760 and 1775, examining the origins of the American Revolution
- Answer the questions: How did a population generally content to be British subjects move to a position where they were contemplating independence? What exactly were the would-be revolutionaries opposing, what were they proposing, and why?
- Set the scene for the Revolution, and establish the context of the American colonies within the British social, political, cultural, and economic sphere and the Atlantic World in general. Includes life in the 18th century, relationships and communications between England and the colonies, the changes brought about by the French and Indian War, the growth of an "American" identity, and the rise of colonial protest and mutual hostility.
- Enable visitors to understand the global context in which the Revolution occurred, the interconnectedness of events and decisions in England and the American colonies, that the Revolution itself was the result of long years of increasing tension, and that there were many and varied motives in the taking (or not) of sides.

Media and atmosphere

Visitors, having left the Theater experience, now enter Zone 1 via an introductory 'hub' space. This darkened, enclosing exhibit, takes the visitor on an exciting overview journey through the events and issues leading up to the outbreak of hostilities between rebellious colonists and the British Crown. Projected video sequences and images around the walls and across the floor are linked to an audio commentary to deliver a brief, punchy presentation designed to reinforce what visitors have experienced in the Theater, or to introduce those visitors who have not been through the Theater experience to the main points of the period 1760-1775.

Visitors are prepared to engage with some of the key issues which exercised tongues in coffee houses and taverns and on street corners in the 1760s. How should the abuses of rights by the Crown be opposed? Were these really abuses at all?

After this overview, visitors are free to explore the other exhibits in this Zone in their own way. To make the chronology clear, however, there is an obvious but not mandatory sequence of topics for visitors in the first area of the Zone (the What happened? area) which takes the narrative in detail from 1760 to 1775, highlighting:

- Stretching the bonds of Empire – Britain and her colonies
- Governors and the Governed – colonial society in America
- The introduction of the Stamp Act and the reaction to it, 1765
- The Boston Massacre, 1770
- The Boston Tea Party, 1773
- The Coercive Acts, 1774
- The First Continental Congress, 1774
- Lexington and Concord, 1775

Here visitors get immersed in the atmosphere of intense debate and broad popular protest, and the exhibits reinforce the sense of increasing tensions and the clamor of voices. For each topic in the sequence there is a mix of media which use the collections to illustrate the tangible evidence of the story, supported by subtle scenic reconstruction to give the 18th-century context, audio-visual presentations, interactives and integrated program and study areas.

For example, the topic area on the Stamp Act is composed of a set of component exhibits. Examples of stamped documents, representing the detested Stamp Act of 1765 illustrate the kinds of material affected by the Stamp Act and how the Act affected different people. An audio-visual evocation of the attack on stamp duty collector Andrew Oliver's house in Boston (October, 1765) is set within elements of scenic reconstruction to give dramatic voice to convey the scale of the outrage at the Act among many colonists and popular action against it, and underline the reasons for its repeal. A supporting multimedia touchscreen lets visitors explore the equal indignation of the Crown at such resistance and examine key arguments for and against. It also allows visitors to record their own opinions on the fairness of this legislation using their Smart Buttons. An accompanying in-gallery "Eye Witness" program will be presented at set times through the day, where an interpreter in character as Patrick Henry, delivers his famous speech against the Act. Finally, a mechanical stamping machine interactive, invites visitors to stamp their own broadsheet as a memento.

Nearby there is an Interactive Learning Area to support the exhibits in this Zone. Here visitors find activities related to the topics in this area. They can, for example, have a go at writing in the 18th-century style with a quill pen, or design their own broadsheet attacking or defending the Stamp Act. In the Study Area, visitors can pursue the topic in even greater detail if they wish, examining through computer databases original writings from contemporary commentators, ribald cartoons of the period, and listen to popular songs and ballads related to the protests.

As another example, when visitors reach The Boston Massacre topic, they are invited to get involved in the debate concerning and the trial of the redcoat soldiers accused of cold-blooded killing of innocent civilian protesters. This event illustrates the tensions breeding in New England and is a contributor to the later flashpoint which started the war in the region around Boston. An interactive audio-visual presentation conducted with an interpreter (called a "Votes & Proceedings" program), involves visitors in opposing viewpoints and evidence and allows the audience to participation in deciding the verdict on this incident. Using their Smart Buttons, visitors register their choice, and can find out what percentage of previous visitors have chosen the same way. The presentation is supported by graphic and object areas (such as examples of the kinds of weapons involved), to which the interpreter refers.

Of course, the actual outcome of the trial is explained and compared to visitors' choices. Visitors are surprised to learn that John Adams, later hero of the Patriot cause and second President of the independent United States, was the lawyer who successfully defended the redcoat soldiers. This demonstrates the fascinating complexity of the story, a very human story, as one which is characterized by dynamic change in events, opinions and motivations.

The flexible interpretive program space within this Zone supports a variety of changing presentations. These use backdrop scenery and props to create a context of the 18th century and a particular setting appropriate to the topic of the program. For example, here visitors witness a scene from 1774 at the time of the First Continental Congress and the aftermath of the introduction of the Coercive Acts. Matters are at a crisis point. We learn of the events of the last nine years and the present situation through the eyes of the African American valet of a delegate to the Congress, who is loading the coach for the return of his master back to his home. He underlines some of the contentions among the delegates, and gives his own view on the notions of freedom, equality, and rights emerging in discussions.

The chronological sequence of topics is supported by two other, smaller areas. One highlights individuals and groups who figure in the story in this period, and explores their varied backgrounds, motivations and experiences in more detail. Some objects are displayed here – personal items associated with specific people, such as their letters and clothing. Where their own words are known, these are accessed by visitors through multimedia computer stations, and some characters like John Adams (portrayed by actors) can be “quizzed” in this way – visitors can select questions to ask, and get a response, building into a virtual conversation across the centuries.

The other supporting area leads visitors into a deeper examination of the key ideas and meanings of the Zone, such as the development in this period of a sense of an American as opposed to a British colonial identity, and the concepts of “actual” and “virtual” representation. The exhibits here also use objects to illustrate the ideas – examples of items which show a developing sense of new identity – flags, seals and symbols.

The design of this whole Zone indeed reflects this increasing sense of crisis, as lighting and color combine to create the mood of a society divided.

Exhibit Zone 2: Revolution, 1775-1783

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, 1776

Under a full persuasion of the justness of our cause, I cannot entertain an idea that it will finally sink, though it may remain for some time under a cloud.

George Washington

... Though it was once the ton of this army to treat them in the most contemptible light, they are now become a formidable enemy ...

English officer, 1777

Little short of a standing miracle ...

George Washington, writing of the victory of the Patriots over the British Empire

Content and intent

- Presentation of the story between 1775 and 1783, examining the nature and course of the Revolution itself.
- Visitors will understand the Revolution as a complex process of upheaval, that led to and was shaped by warfare.
- Visitors will understand that there was a complexity of motivations for taking sides, changing sides, or trying to keep out of the struggle, and that these motivations were a mix of personal and collective goals.

Media and atmosphere

Visitors in this Zone are plunged into the fray, from the momentous aftermath of the first shots at Lexington and Concord to the final mopping-up operations after the British surrender at Yorktown, this is a rollercoaster ride of one dramatic event after another. Moves are followed by counter-moves, victories against the odds are followed by wounding defeats, and the faces, words and objects of the people of the Revolution bring these dramas into intimate contact with visitors.

The Zone takes as its starting point the Battle of Breed's Hill in 1775, and climaxes with George Washington's abdication of his position as Commander-in-Chief in 1783. There is an immersive audio-visual overview as an introduction to Zone 2, where visitors experience a sense of the course of the conflict. They see that victory was not a certainty for either side, that the war ranged far and wide across the interior of the country, from the North to the South, on the high seas, and even across the oceans as it took on a global dimension. They also see the significance of the relationship between the military arm of the Continental Army and militia and the political head of Congress and the citizenry. Battle maps on the floor of this space map the locations and campaigns in outline, as video sequences of the conflict, and quotations and commentaries from historical characters, sequence around the perimeter walls.

After leaving this introductory 'hub', visitors enter the main body of the Zone – a sequenced chronological area, which they are free to explore as they choose or follow the obvious chronological pattern. It contains exhibits on the following topics:

- Appointment of George Washington as C-in-C and formation of a Continental Army
- Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775
- The Siege of Quebec, 1775
- The Second Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence, 1776
- The Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 1776
- The Philadelphia Campaign 1777
- Battle of Saratoga, 1777
- Valley Forge, 1777-78
- The French Alliance, 1778
- Battle of Monmouth, 1778
- The War at Sea
- The Frontier War
- The Home Front
- State constitutions
- New Jersey as "cockpit state"
- Southern Campaigns 1778-81
- Battle of Yorktown, 1781
- Peace of Paris, 1783
- George Washington's abdication of power, 1783

In the exhibits here visitors see the paraphernalia of war in all its forms, from the artillery used to pound enemy positions to the personal knives and picks carried by soldiers to clean their clay pipes and carve designs into their powder horns. This is warfare of the 18th-century in a very personal form. Some of these objects can be linked to known individuals, others simply speak of heroism, sacrifice and death.

There are more playful moments, when visitors encounter games and pastime items with which soldiers amused themselves around camp or on the march. And there are reminders that many different people were part of this story – women, children, people from France, Germany, Poland, Scotland and Ireland, American Indian tribes such as the Oneidas, and African Americans.

The first exhibit that visitors encounter concerns the Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775.

Visitors will learn about the nature of warfare in the 18th century. They discover that the battle at Breed's Hill (also known as the battle of Bunker Hill) proved to the Americans that the British in head-on battle were a formidable disciplined fighting force unlikely to be defeated outright that way. But it also proved to the British that the Americans were a serious opposition, not easily or lightly crushed. Muskets from the collections are displayed in "battle" formation, staring out of the case in an upper and lower row in the way that would have confronted the patriots when facing the "thin red line" of the British army. This formation is dramatically put into context, when visitors approach the case. They trigger an audio-visual screen projection which shows the redcoat soldiers in position behind each weapon. On command as visitors get nearer to the case, and as the soldiers can "see the whites of their eyes", they fire in unison by rank. The image of smoke and the sound of the crackle of the musket fire along the line gives visitors an intimate understanding of what it was like to face this disciplined enemy on the field.

To further support this concept, visitors can enter an adjacent audio-visual space which turns the tables. This time visitors are put into the shoes of the redcoat lines. They face a screen which provides a view up Breed's Hill near Boston on that fateful day in 1775, and the backs of the front row of redcoat soldiers, marching in formation and to the beat of the drum up the hill. Musket fire and artillery shot rain down from the patriot positions and the very floor shakes with its impact. As any good disciplined British soldier, visitors are expected to take up the ranks of those who fall in the line of duty in front. And just in case there is any wavering or thoughts of desertion, a British sergeant-major in the form of a costumed interpreter, stands by to shout encouragement and maintain discipline. Woe betide anyone who falls foul of his keen eye and cocked pistol!

By contrast, after visitors have experienced exhibits on the early campaigns of the war, they now get the opportunity to explore the key words of the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence of 1776, demonstrating that the pen was at least as mighty as the sword. Here visitors explore how and why the Declaration was written and issued, and what it meant and means, as a statement of the Revolution, and as the basis for a new political order. These "electrifying words" are examined in various ways. One of the original copies of the Declaration is displayed, as are examples of writing equipment from the period and other key writings (such as letters from George Washington, military orders, political broadsheets, coded messages, and the lyrics of popular ballads) to emphasize the importance of words to the Revolution.

A major audio-visual presentation also explores the document in a highly visually exciting and entertaining way, by using a virtual version of the Declaration. This virtual version is literally "opened up" using computer graphics trickery to show how we can "read between the lines" of the words. For example, what are its authors really claiming? What does the form of words used to conclude the document signify? What ideas seen here can we still see all around us today?

The flexible interpretive program space within this Zone supports a variety of changing presentations. These use backdrop scenery and props to create a context of the 18th century and a particular setting appropriate to the topic of the program. These include a scene set in a print shop where visitors meet a printers' apprentice. He is turning out copies of the Declaration of Independence, and the year is 1776. He explains how Congress has come to this resolution and what he thinks of the views expressed within it. This is the irrevocable break with Great Britain made solid in word and pledge. He also explains that he is thinking of joining the Continental Army, but his parents are opposed to it – they are loyalists. He expands on some of the personal reasons why he, a young single man, might want to go to war, and tries to convey the complexity of motivations for, opposition to, and ambivalence toward the Patriot cause among others of his acquaintance.

Visitors move on further in the story, passing through exhibits on the key battles of Trenton and Princeton, the Philadelphia Campaign and the battle of Saratoga. They now turn to an understanding the need for systematized training of the Continental Army, drawn as it was from individual regiments from all the colonies, each with their own way of drilling and own commands. Here, visitors see how the Valley Forge encampment in 1777-78 was a turning point in the training of the Continental Army, injecting much greater discipline, and unifying commands and drill into one system across all brigades and regiments. Visitors encounter Baron Von Steuben, the charismatic Prussian character responsible for the new training of the Army, and they get a taste of the discipline required to drill effectively. Visitors are invited to copy the drilling manoeuvres of Von Steuben, by entering a giant sculptural version of the Von Steuben manual, where the illustrations of soldiers' moves are created as life-size cut-out graphic exhibits for visitors to stand in front of and copy. Nearby, visitors can see the "real thing" - a 1st edition of Von Steuben's military manual, which shows the diagrams and illustrations used by the Army in training, and the letter written by George Washington to Von Steuben and signed in his own hand, thanking the Baron for his services.

Exhibits on other aspects of the important reorganization effected during the Valley Forge encampment under the leadership of George Washington support this area. Visitors can get close to important documents here, including Valley Forge military day books, orderly books, muster rolls, letters, and orders, which show the evidence we have for piecing together what actually happened during this romanticized moment in American history. Visitors see the actual letter written by George Washington to Congress from Valley Forge in December 1777, warning them that without supplies and support, the Army had no future. And they see a letter from George Washington appointing William Erskine as military surveyor and geographer, June 1778. Surveying was vital to the effective planning of military campaigns. These exhibits build, however, to a moment of awe and reflection, as visitors enter a darkened, enclosed chamber to see a very rare object. In the atmospheric dim light (dim for conservation reasons), there glows faintly the standard or flag of the Commander-in-Chief. This was George Washington's personal banner, set up wherever he placed his headquarters on campaign and symbolic of his leadership.

The daily lives of soldiers are explored as visitors plunge further into the conflict, through the war at sea and on the frontier, and the campaigns in the South. It is possible to get a sense of the personal experiences of the Revolution through the personal equipment of soldiers. Many items on the collections have been personalized by soldiers with their names, initials or designs and drawings. For example, visitors see two very special powder horns – containers made from cattle horns to hold gunpowder. These two horns are both personalized with engraved words and designs – by the same individual, one Jabez Rockwell. Rockwell was at Valley Forge, and, evidently, having lost his powder horn here (or traded it), he got another to replace it. By chance, both ended up in the collections here (one at the National Park, one at the Valley Forge Historical Society).

They are now united again here in the American Revolution Center. Visitors see a dramatization of Jabez Rockwell's experience, a hypothetical account of how he came to leave two carved powder horns down to us through 230 years of history. A supporting Study Area nearby displays other examples of powder horns, where designs and styles can be compared. Visitors can also see a very rare surviving example of a portrait of an ordinary Revolutionary War soldier, Private Joseph Latch. Even rarer still, they will hardly believe that they can come face to face with actual photographs of such soldiers, especially as the invention of photography came almost 60 years after the ending of the war. But there's the clue – in the 1860s, some very old war veterans were photographed – all had fought under Washington in their distant youth!

Finally, visitors enter the ending of the war, coming to the Allied siege of Yorktown and the British Surrender there in 1781. This major American and French victory over the British marked the effective end of the War. Here visitors get close to this defining moment through the iconic objects from the collections.

Within a carefully climate controlled enclosure, and within dramatic, conservation-focused low light levels, visitors encounter the personal sleeping marquee of George Washington, as used by him at the siege of Yorktown. The back part of the tent was used by him as a sleeping area, and the front part for conducting meetings. As visitors take in this awe-inspiring object – a very rare survival from the period – they are also aware that the tent is "coming to life". As the surrounding dim lights dim further, sound effects and subtle shadow lighting give the impression that General Washington is in the tent, discussing matters of importance late into the night with his aides. We see their flickering shadows and hear their deliberations on the eve of this momentous event. In this way, this iconic object, one of the "stars" of the collections of the American Revolution Center, is re-animated and personalized, with the very human drama it represents made dramatically clear.

Exhibit Zone 3: Legacy

The Citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the sole Lords and Proprietors of a vast Tract of Continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the World, and abounding with all the necessities and conveniences of life, are now by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute freedom and Independency; They are, from this period, to be considered as the Actors on a most conspicuous Theatre [sic], which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence for the display of human greatness and felicity . . . At this auspicious period, the United States came into existence as a Nation, and if their Citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be intirely [sic] their own.

George Washington, "Circular to the States", June 8, 1783.

It was patched and piebald policy then, as it is now, ever was, and ever will be, world without end.

John Adams

Content and intent

- Presentation of the story between from 1783 up to the present day, examining the short and long-term significance and legacy of the Revolution.
- Visitors will understand that the Revolution was not over when the war ended. There was a process of working out what the gains of the peace meant for the newly independent states.
- Visitors will understand the main effects of the Revolution and the war on people's lives

- Visitors will understand that the Constitution is the foundation of the American republic, and was a careful balancing act, attempting to preserve the ideals of the Revolution while accommodating the realities of creating a political union of states.
- Visitors will understand that the Revolution did not occur in a vacuum and had huge consequences far beyond the shores of America, as it still does.
- Visitors will understand what its legacies are within the United States, and be able to use some of this material to form a personal and individual sense of the significance and relevance of the Revolution.
- Visitors will understand the nature of Valley Forge as a cherished national symbol.

Media and atmosphere

This Zone examines the impact of the Revolution in the short and long term on developments in the United States and abroad. Through an introductory audio-visual 'hub', visitors are drawn into an exploration of what the gains and losses of the Revolution were, and who were its winners and losers. Maps projected across the floor anchor visitors in geographical space as the commentary whisks them across to the western frontier, up to Canada, down to the Caribbean and across the Atlantic to France and England, then back to South and Central America. Images and video sequences around the perimeter walls move visitors around in temporal space addressing how the Revolution touched the rest of the world over the next 230 years. Visitors can find out here what influences were at work in Revolutions in other countries, and how the ideas and ideals of the American experience were translated elsewhere. Why did John Adams, say of the French Revolution, for example, that, "the French are no more capable of a republican government than a snowball can exist a whole week in the streets of Philadelphia under a burning sun"?

Passing out of the 'hub' and into the gallery itself, there is a further supporting set of exhibits to follow this chronology further, looking at the following topics:

- State constitutions
- The Philadelphia Convention & The Constitution
- The Bill of Rights
- The Slavery Question
- The Federalist-Anti-Federalist Debate
- The Frontier & The Northwest Ordinance
- Winners and Losers
- Effects of the War
- Effects of the Revolution
- Republican Reforms
- Antislavery
- Republican Religion
- Revolutionary Citizens
- George Washington as first President
- George Washington: Man and Myth
- The French Revolution
- A World Turned Upside Down: Global Revolutions
- Valley Forge: the Making and Remaking of a National Symbol
- Interpreting and Using the Revolution

Multimedia stations provide a summary of the framing of the US constitution in 1788-89, through to the new South African constitution of 1996, tracing the threads of influence which have carried the concepts of equality, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on such a sweeping tide. There are IT links to the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, so that visitors can find out in greater depth the ways that the US Constitution can be explored there.

Video testimony of contemporary figures and the spoken words of writers down the centuries can be accessed by visitors to see how the spirit of the Revolution has informed the changing face of the world.

Visitors also examine the symbolism of the Revolution, and the way that Revolutionary iconography – its images, words, people, and places – have been used down the years and still resonate today, from someone asking you to sign with your "John Hancock" to "Minuteman" missiles.

A major part of this examination is an exhibit on George Washington: Man and Myth. George Washington is a legendary figure and consequently it can be hard to discern what he was like as a man. It is possible to come closer to both the man and the legend through his personal possessions and objects associated with him. This exhibit area is intimate and like a treasury, but with transparent and semi-transparent glazing in layers around the object displays. This approach is intended to convey a sense of both Washington the man (the human scale of his possessions, the personal details they tell us about him) and the myth (the way Washington has been idolized, the fact that he is one of the great leaders of history, the difficulty in seeing past legends and romanticizations). Visitors are drawn into the space by an iconic bust of Washington by Houdon. An almost tunnel-like path behind this sculpture is flanked by glass panels etched with key quotes about Washington from his contemporaries and from later commentators. As visitors approach the inner area of the exhibit, the space becomes darker and more intimate, warmer in tone. Here we are getting closer to Washington the man. Rare and precious examples of his personal possessions and objects associated with his life are carefully placed to form a vault-like space: his breeches and waistcoat, the silver camp cups he used on campaign during the war, and his personal medicine chest. Objects connected to the people around George Washington here including a set of china, belonging to George Washington Craik, and An Help and Guide to Christian Families, a copy of a book written by Martha Washington and signed in her own hand.

The surrounding exhibits around the enclosure include images of Washington, notably a portrait of Washington by Joseph White (drawn from life in 1790), and quotes from the man himself. These words, more than anything, are the key to understanding the heart and mind of this monumental figure in American history.

Adjacent to this area, as part of a section on the commemoration of the Revolution down the years, visitors can see some of the fascinating memorabilia and commemorative items produced in memory of George Washington's time at Valley Forge in 1777-1778. This association has powerful mythical status – Washington kneeling in the snow to pray for deliverance, endurance, and victory; Washington sharing the privations of his troops; Washington rising above the sinister machinations of a shadowy cabal plotting to overthrow his leadership; Washington pounding on the conscience of Congress to provide vital supplies for the weak, cold, and hungry troops. The objects here demonstrate the enduring appeal of imagery from the Revolution and examine some of the myths and some of the truths embodied by such commemorative art. These objects include the famous 19th-century painting, "The March to Valley Forge" by Trego, and a full-size commemorative George Washington coach made in the early 20th century.

Visitors are also asked here to consider what the Revolution means to them personally, and how it still affects their own lives. The process of defining the United States of America and American identity may have started in the 18th century, but it is still very much ongoing. The Revolutionary period saw a struggle for Americans to define themselves and their nation. In that process new symbols and icons emerged, many of which endure today. Here visitors can see how these abstract ideas - a sense of nationhood or patriotism, a personal identification with one's country, liberty and equality - can be explored through tangible objects.

An exhibit here begins by exploring the notion of the emergence of the idea of a united confederation of states into one political entity - a United States of America. It looks at the beginnings of this process, seen in the early years of the Revolution, through the display of objects. These include most notably a new design of button for the Continental Army, manufactured in 1777. This button, used on uniform coats, bore the letters "USA". Seemingly insignificant, until visitors discover that this is one of the earliest examples of any object in the United States actually bearing such a legend. Can they imagine an America without the letters USA today? Impossible. And here is where it began. The further unique resonance of this object is that it was found right here, at Valley Forge, through archaeological investigation.

There is also an Interpretive Program Area to support this exhibit, which allows a variety of perspectives on the development of American identity to be explored. For example, what does the union of states mean to an African American female soldier today? What does it mean to her to wear the "US" buttons on her uniform? And what did the fight for the freedom of the new republic mean to Molly Pitcher, Patriot heroine on the frontline of battle 230 years before? Two interpreters can hold a dialogue across the centuries to discuss this subject. Another program can explore what the Revolutionary author and editor Nathaniel Ames might think if he were to converse with visitors today. In 1776 Ames sent a message in astoundingly prophetic words to the "unborn Inhabitants" of America some 200 years hence, saying, "you will know that we dream'd of your Times".

Further interactive exhibits ask visitors to use their Smart Buttons to vote on issues, contribute their thoughts and test their knowledge about the fundamental concepts that the Revolution embodies - their rights, liberties, duties and responsibilities as citizens, their duty to remember those who suffered to provide the freedoms they enjoy today, and the importance of knowing your country's history to understand who you are.

Conclusion Zone

Content and intent

- Provides a defined 'end' to the Center experience
- Reinforces the main messages of the Center about the American Revolution as a whole
- Provides a decompression space before the visitor experience continues in the Park.

Media and atmosphere

A positive tone is set here, which is also thought-provoking and open-ended. This exhibit space helps to punctuate the experience, providing an uplifting but not triumphal sense. There is a focus on the sounds and images of people – to reinforce that the Revolution was a human drama. People visitors have encountered throughout their Center experience reappear here, and key quotes and phrases accompany them. Exhibits are designed to deliver punchy messages or impressions, and are not overly didactic, and the media reflects this – subtle lighting changes, soundscapes, large-scale dynamic and memorable images. Visitors are left with a sense that they are connected in some way to the story of the American Revolution.

Viewing Valley Forge

Content and intent

- Provides a visual link to the landscape of Valley Forge
- Provides an opportunity for visitors to make conceptual and visual connections to the "realness" of the story
- Provides a pleasant view for its own sake
- Provides a congenial setting for range of events and programs

Media and atmosphere

Visitors Atmosphere and tone are provided by the view itself, supported by interpretive graphic panels.

Visiting Valley Forge

Introduction

"Our prospect was indeed dreary. In our miserable condition, to go into the wild woods and build us habitations to stay in, in such a weak and starved condition, was appalling in the highest degree . . . [But] We were engaged in the defense of our injured country and were determined to persevere."

Private Joseph Plumb Martin, writing about his winter at Valley Forge, 1777-78

Though prosperity is a good thing, a nation survives only so long as the spirit of sacrifice and self-discipline is strong within its people...

If we remember this, we can bring health where there is disease, peace where there is strife, progress where there is poverty and want.

And when our Tri-centennial celebration rolls around... grateful Americans will come to this shrine of quiet valor, this forge of our Republic's iron core.

President Gerald Ford, 1976

Content and intent

- The visitor experience continues into the entire Park at Valley Forge.
- Visitors experience the Revolution at one of its iconic sites and connect with the story "on the ground"
- Visitors are offered a wide range of interpretive experiences in the Park, which consider both its story in relation to the Encampment of 1777-78 and to other aspects of history before and since.
- Visitors are able to see in greater detail, many of the aspects of the history of the Revolution, as they were played out on this particular site
- The Park is a microcosm of the story of the Revolution – here were many and diverse peoples, here were civilians and soldiers, politicians and military commanders, here were women and children, here were issues debated and discussed, here were ideals and commitments tested and strained, here were motivations and aspirations shaped and changed, here people died in the line of duty, here was history made.
- Visitors experience a sense of the scale of human activity which took place during the Encampment
- Visitors experience a sense of the nature of human activity which took place during the Encampment and where it happened
- Visitors experience a sense of the multiple personal stories, perspectives, and diversity of experience related to the Encampment and the Revolution
- Visitors are engaged emotionally to the story of the Encampment and Revolution
- Visitors experience the site as a special and unique place
- Visitors understand the landscape features and their integral role to the story of the Encampment
- Visitors see a clear distinction between original and commemorative features in the landscape

Media and atmosphere

There is a broad range of media throughout the Park, with options for exhibit presentation and programmatic infrastructure currently under consideration as part of master planning for the Park's future management and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Common to all the options is a focus on the people of Valley Forge and an understanding of the sense of place here – the landforms, the flora and fauna, the geography and topography, the weather and the location – all crucial factors in the story of how a log city of some 20,000 soldiers and hundreds of camp followers, visitors and suppliers developed on this site.

Exhibits throughout the Park will connect visitors to the sense of excitement that treading on this "sacred ground" means in innovative ways and with new perspectives. The Park will address the many participants in the events here, and present them as a microcosm of the vast range of peoples who played a part in the story, and their equally broad motivations, experiences and attitudes. Everyone can find something to connect to in this landscape, whether it is the story of the women who supported, helped feed and clothe the troops, to the Rhode Island regiment of African American patriots stationed here, to the Oneida Indian warrior scouts who played a crucial role in skirmishes against the British.

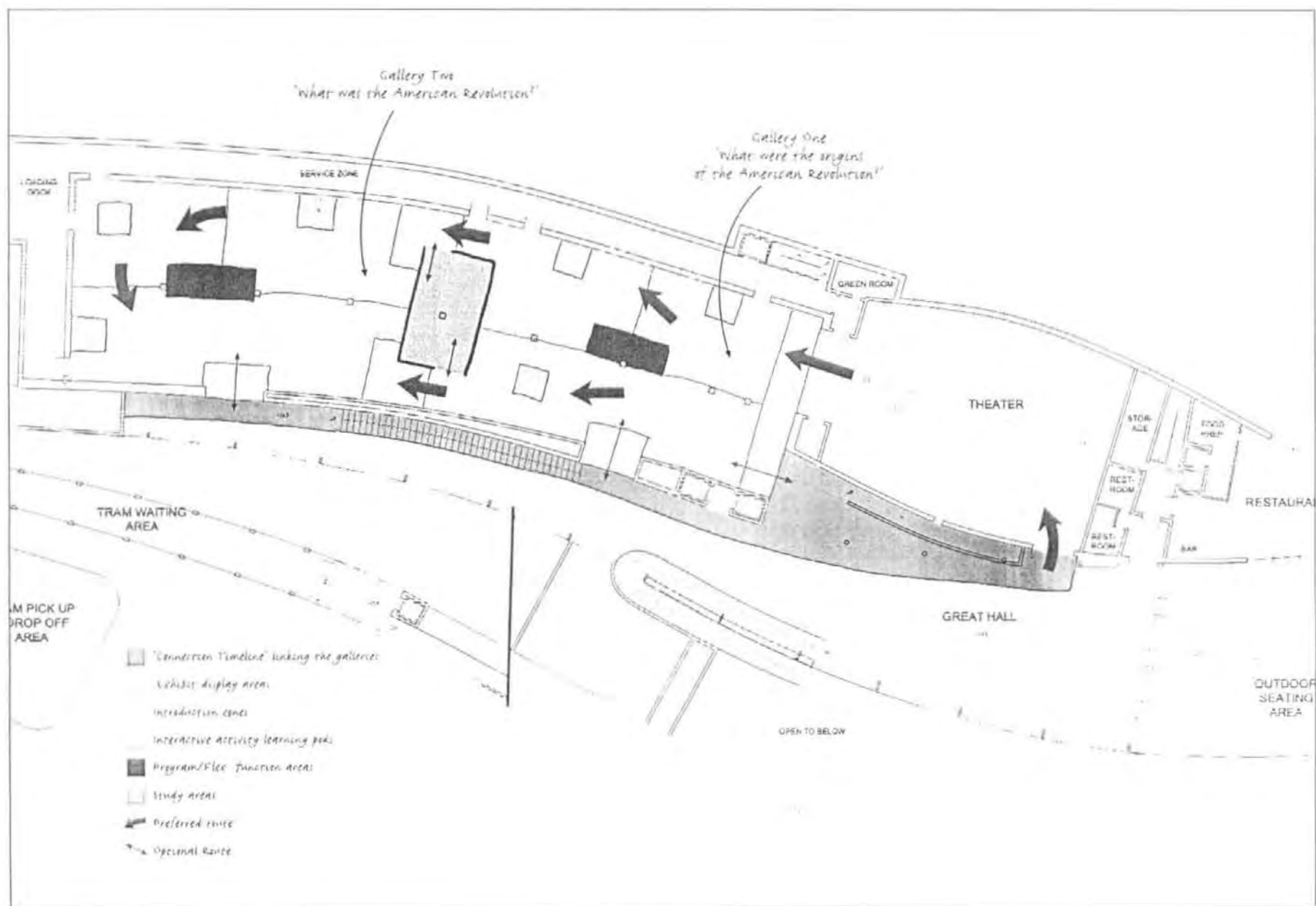
In this way, the Park is "a point of convergence between past, present, and future" as historian Charlene Mires has pointed out, where people coming to visit automatically form an active part of the Park's ongoing history of commemoration.

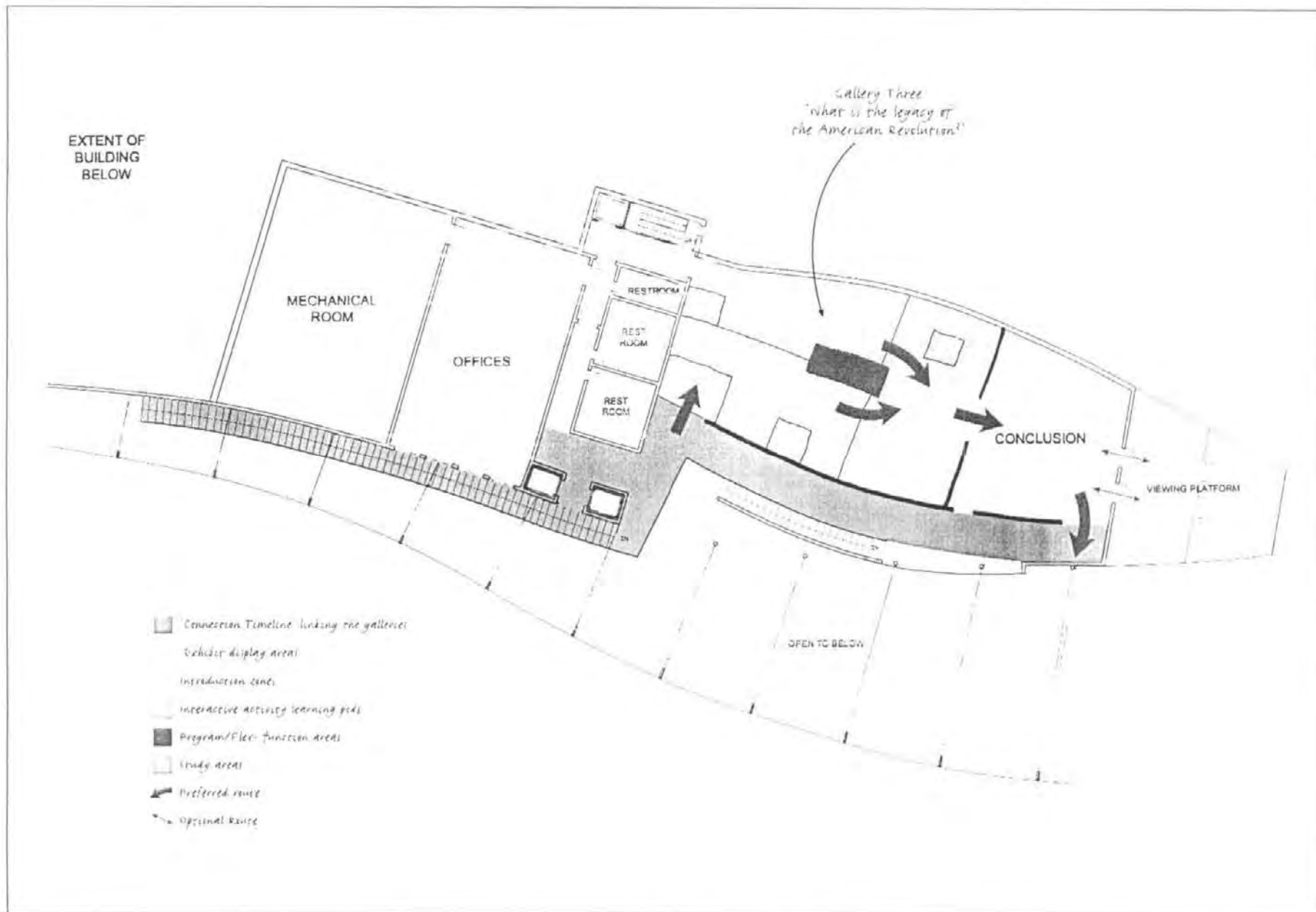
There is a common general recommended circulation route round the Park, with key interpretive focus areas linked to specific topics:

- At the Muhlenberg Brigade site visitors learn about George Washington's strategy at in laying out and organizing the Encampment, the daily life of the soldiers, their motivations, and how the Encampment contributed to the development of American identity.
- At the Artillery Park site, visitors explore George Washington's strategy in relation to the technical business of war – the disposition of forces, fortifications, and drilling, and learn through a background of the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777 why these activities happened here rather than elsewhere in the winter of 1777-1778.
- At the Washington's Headquarters building, we examine George Washington's leadership and personality and how these saw him and the Army through crises and through troubled relationships with Congress. We also see how his iconic symbolic status as associated with Valley Forge helped forge an American identity
- At the Area on the north side of the Schuylkill River, near Walnut Hill, visitors learn about the layout of the Encampment on this side of the strategically crucial waterway, looking at the commissary (the Army agency responsible for supplying food supplies), the involvement of local farmers and other civilians in supporting the camp, and how the natural resources of the Valley Forge area continued to play a role after the War in the development of industry and agriculture in the region.
- At Varnum's Quarters and the Star Redoubt, visitors discover how Valley Forge connected to the expanding global nature of war. During the Encampment the French Alliance was concluded, for example. They also examine the many other participants at Valley Forge in the forces under Washington – Irish, Polish, German, African American, and Iroquois Confederacy soldiers.
- At the final focus area near to Huntington's Quarters and the edge of the open Grand Parade "basin" in the landscape, visitors return to explore again the motivations of the soldiers and camp followers here, and experience the heart of the site – the place where mass drilling took place and where thousands of troops staged a jubilant gun-salute celebration in honor of the alliance with France.

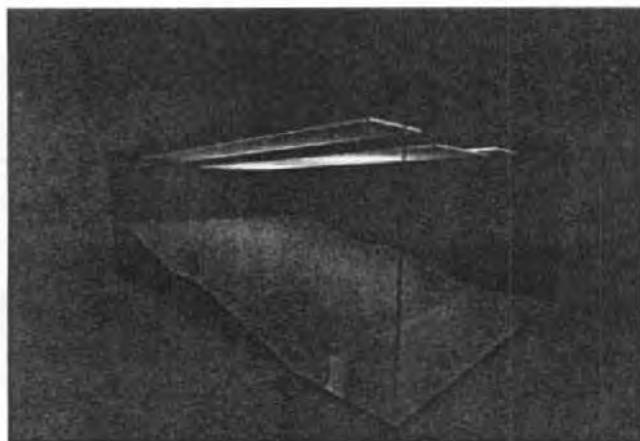
Options for structuring the visitor experience in the Park vary in terms of intensity of exhibits and approaches to what visitors actually see in the landscape. The media options range from large-scale three-dimensional replicas of the camp infrastructure, such as log huts, tents, bake ovens, cart paths, and fortifications to minimal interventions in the landscape but use of modern technology to virtually recreate past scenes. Such "virtual viewers" allow visitors to simultaneously see, wherever they point the viewer, the realtime present-day view and the overlay of a historic scene in animated form (either computer-generated or as live action footage). Audio information, effects and atmosphere can be combined with this. Another option is for areas where original features, techniques or skills are created/tested, using the findings from archaeological research, in programmed demonstrations. Activities might include hut building, cooking, hunting, artificing, and fortification building. Another option is for visitors to be immersed in intensive living history environments around the park – where past characters bring to life the daily experiences of the people of Valley Forge.

All options are based on working with the historic resources of the site – its buildings, landscaped forms and features, historic road traces, and archaeology.

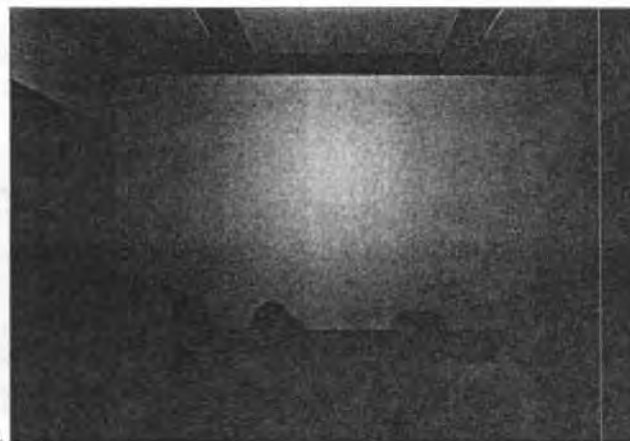




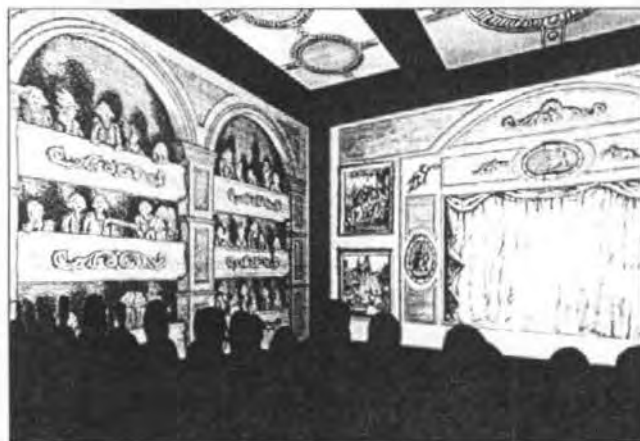
THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION



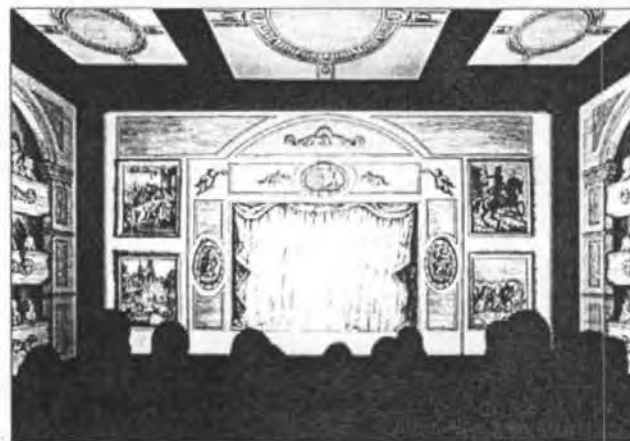
1.



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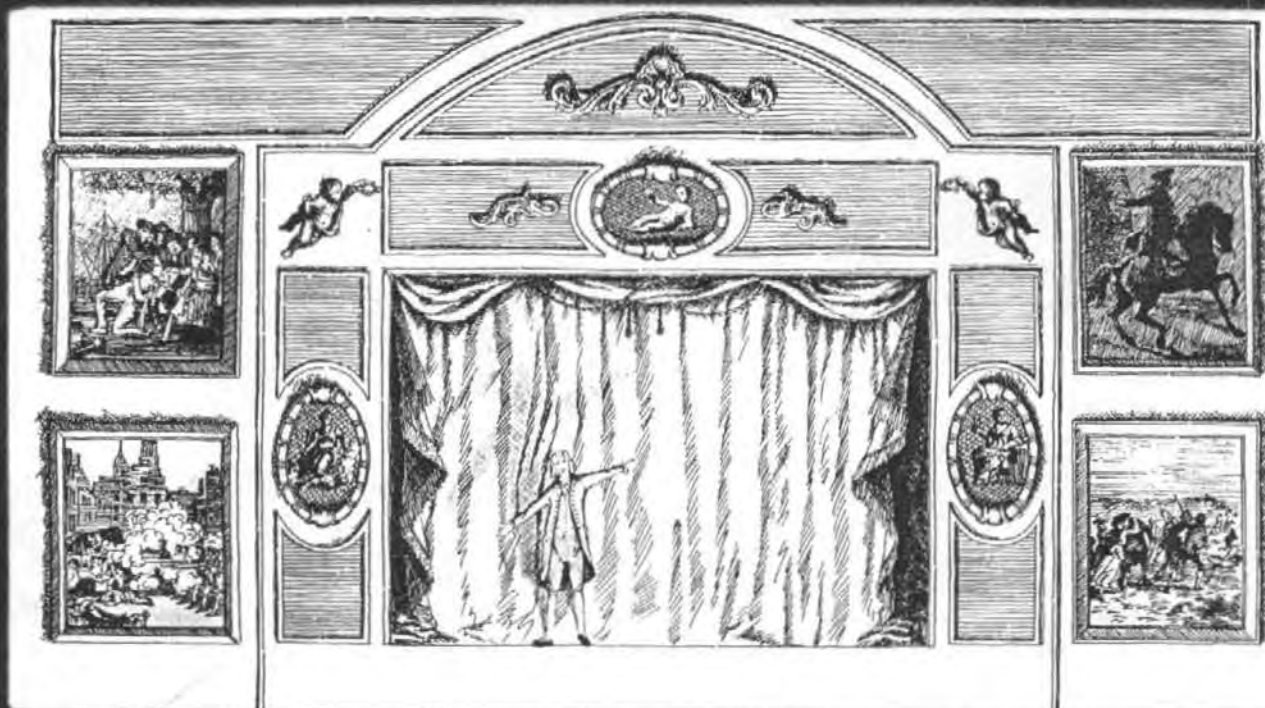


3.



4.

1. Visitors enter an auditorium-type space and are seated in rows facing a small stage.
2. The surroundings appear simple, contemporary, and resemble a lecture theater. The lights dim and a figure appears center stage, starkly spot lit. He is dressed in modern clothes and begins to speak. He welcomes the audience, explaining that he is the master of ceremonies, and announces that they are about to explore an extraordinary story, a story which is still being played out, but without which America would not be what it is today. He points out the modern legacies of this story, and as he does so, images flash up around the room—the Capitol in Washington DC, the Whitehouse, the Stars and Stripes, voting booths, the pledge of allegiance, and so on.
3. Now, he explains that this story began in the middle of the 18th century. As he speaks, as if from afar, the sound of music is heard, slowly getting louder. It is chamber music. At the same time, visitors suddenly begin to notice that the apparently plain and modern surroundings of the auditorium are transforming themselves. Screens descend around the walls, across the ceiling, and down the back of and on the flanks of the stage.
4. On the screens begin to materialize the impression of an 18th-century theater, drawing on the engraving styles of the 18th-century caricaturists and artists William Hogarth and James Gillray.

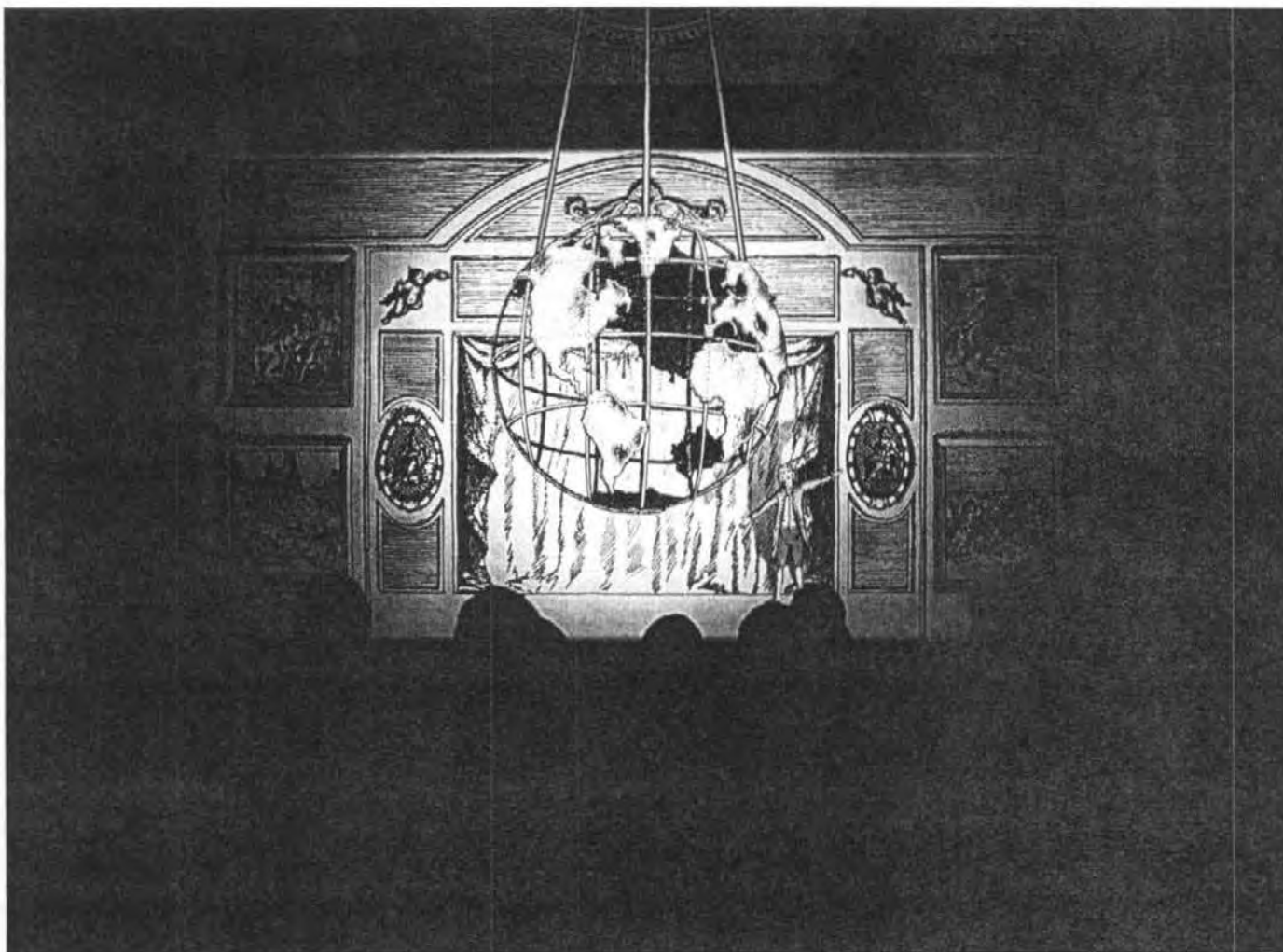


THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION (continued)

5. Visitors now find themselves immersed in what was one of the main arenas for political expression, debate, and popular protest of the 18th century – the theater. They are also somewhere that helped shape the ideas and beliefs of a generation of leaders such as George Washington. Indeed, George Washington's favorite play, "Cato" by Joseph Addison, described the great noble ideals of his hero, the Roman general Cato, ideals which Washington tried to follow throughout his life. And visitors are also somewhere where the fundamental human drama of the Revolution can be emphasized and where it can touch them in a direct, personal, living way.

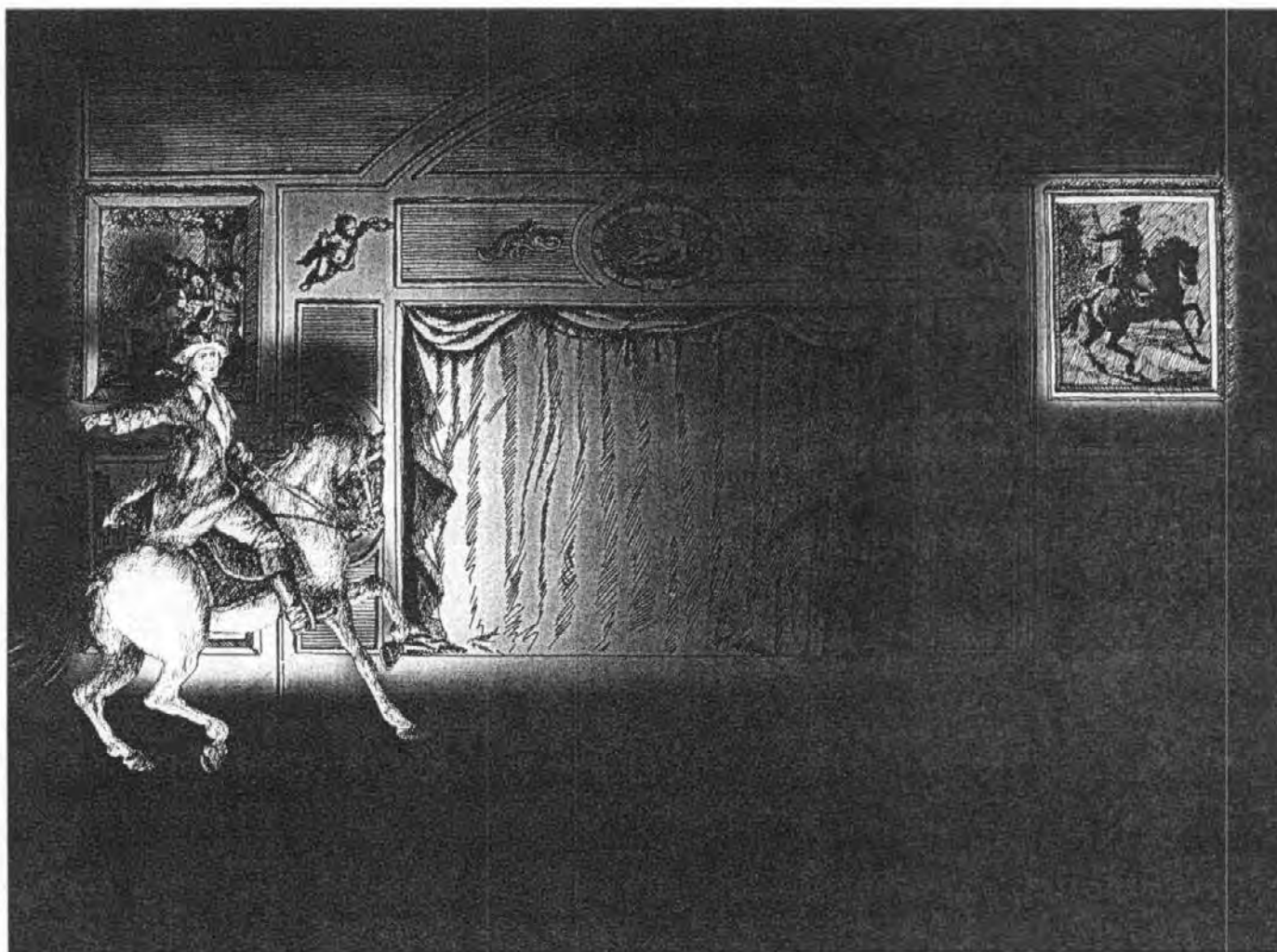
The master of ceremonies has transformed himself – gone are the modern clothes. He now stands before the audience in the finery of an 18th-century gentleman.

He now turns to setting the scene for the story of the Revolution and introduces some of the key characters. He explains that we are about to explore how it was that America threw off its colonial master, established its independence, and embarked on this extraordinary experiment in the creation of a new society.



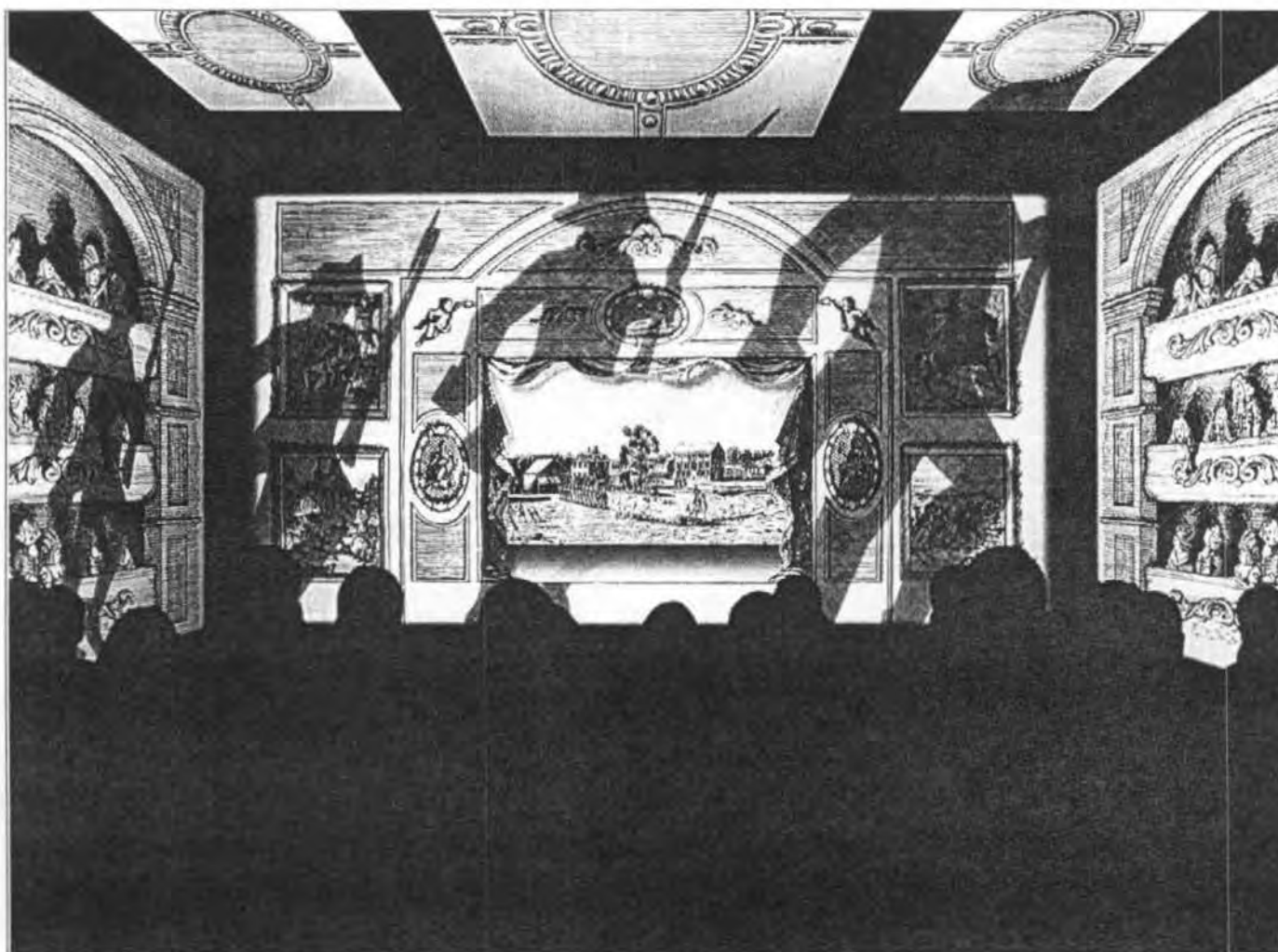
THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION (continued)

6. Our host takes us on a journey to explain a sense of the world in the 1760s, socially, politically, and geographically. A centerpiece of this is a literal look at the world of the time. As the lights dim further, the central roundel of the theater's plasterwork ceiling begins to move. It descends, revealing itself in fact to be a complete globe. As our host explains the world, the globe rotates and key areas are highlighted with spotlights. Simultaneously, the side panels of the proscenium arch of the stage, which appear to be painted with scenes in the 18th-century manner, come to life with animated and filmed sequences to support the host's narrative. In this way we can see the King in Parliament, British empire building in India, the triangular slave trade route, and the nature of the French and Indian War.



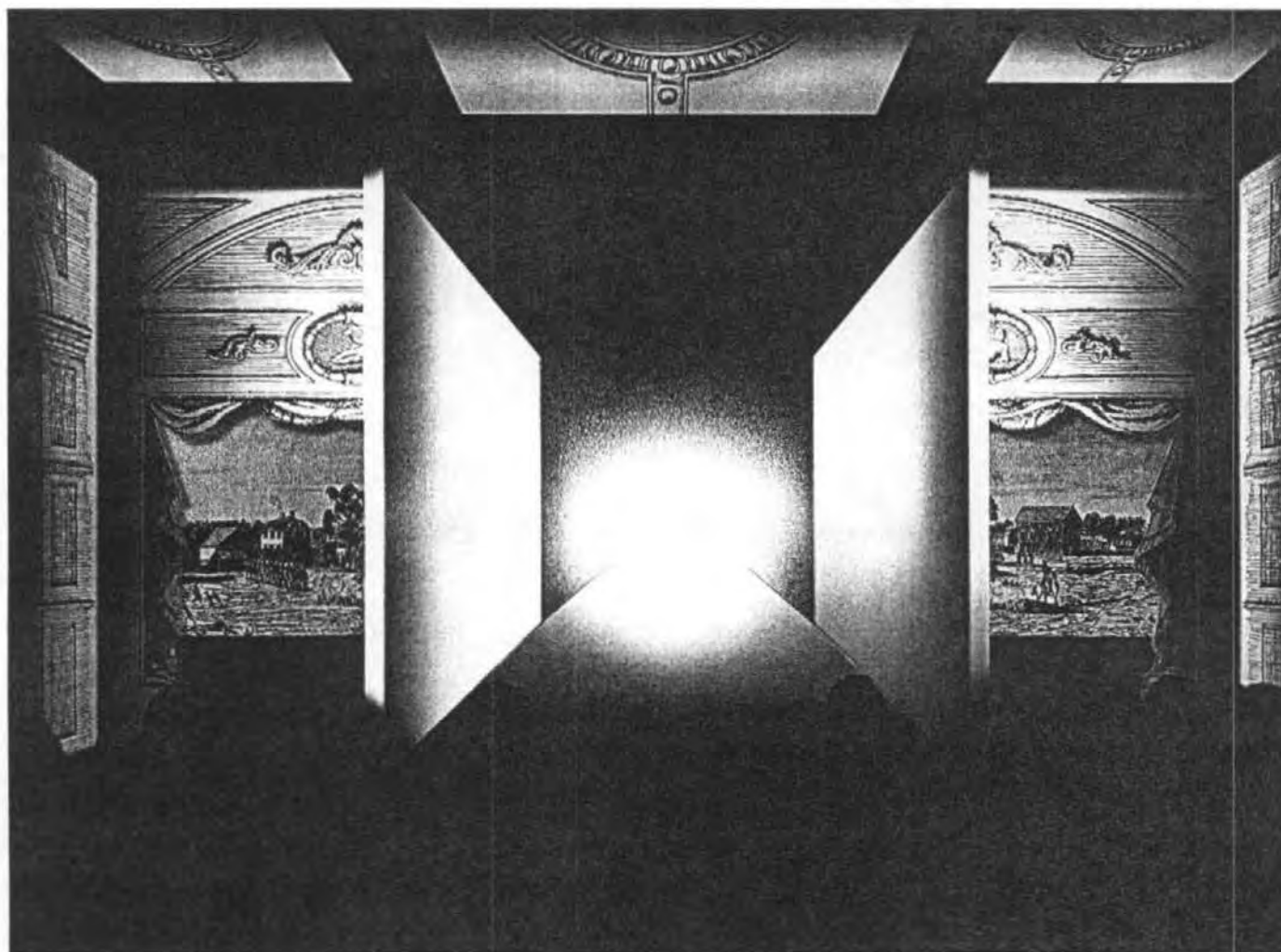
THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION (continued)

7. Our host sketches the main issues and tensions which are besetting the American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s, illustrated with the animated side panels, with changing scenes and events which slide on from stage left and right as cut-outs (as in an 18th-century toy theater), and with interactions from the 'audience' - characters seated in the boxes to left and right, who help to establish a variety of perspectives and opinions on what is happening. Our host establishes that this is a story with many layers and depths, and about which people disagree and differ. He offers that going 'behind the scenes' may help visitors gain a better understanding of the issues. As a climax to this presentation, our host is interrupted by the arrival of Paul Revere, perhaps as a cut-out figure emerging from the side of the stage. This is the gripping prelude to open conflict, which will form the next section of the experience.



THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION
(continued)

B. Now the pivotal events at Lexington and Concord are sketched in a dramatic fashion. The shadows of British troops and minutemen loom across the theater, as the confusion and tension of the moment builds.

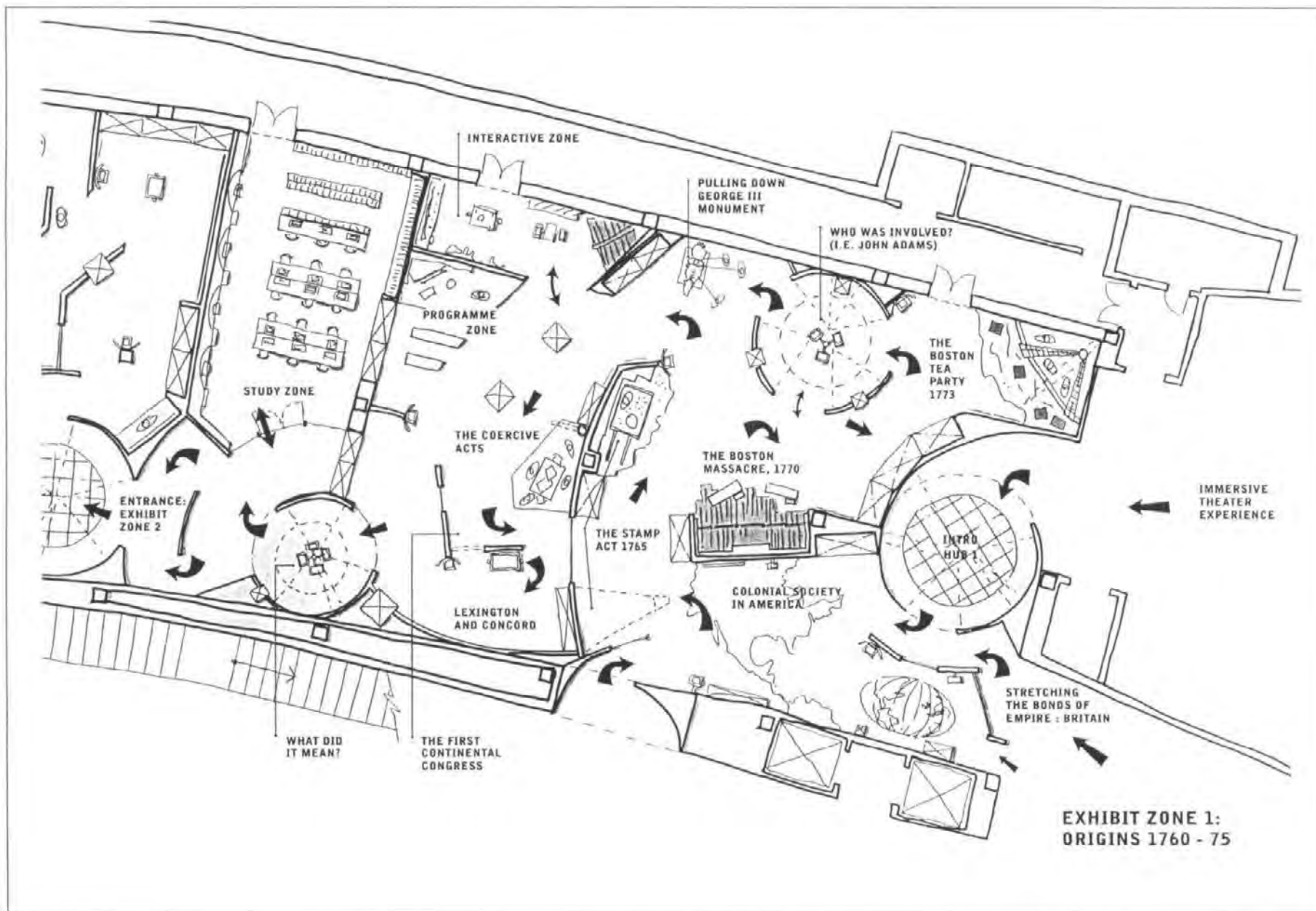


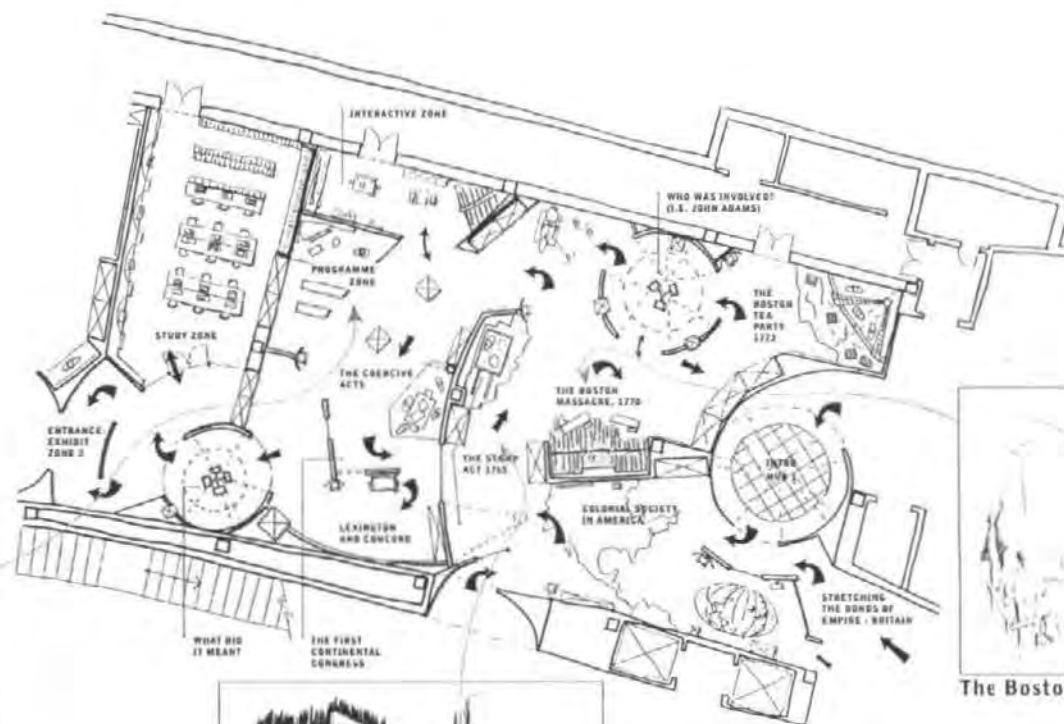
THEATER OF THE REVOLUTION (continued)

9. A shot is heard ("the shot that echoed round the world") and smoke billows from the back of the stage. At this moment, the proscenium arch cracks open and splits aside in an exhilarating 'coup de theatre' moment.

From the smoke, which is backlit now, a figure emerges - a militia man. He breathlessly tells the audience about the events that have occurred at Lexington and Concord. He is returning along the road back to Boston, as part of the militia group now harassing the British. Now, he invites the audience into the story, to explore in more detail how things have come to this and how they will unfold. Visitors leave their seats and follow him through the back of the now split-apart scenery. They are now immersed in the Revolution.

Through the stage, visitors enter the first of the Exhibit Zones.





Programme Zone



The Stamp Act 1765



The Boston Massacre, 1770

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #1

Location

Zone 1: A pod of component exhibits.

Topic

The Stamp Act, 1765.

Includes sub-topics as below:

- Introduction of the act and the reaction to it
- An examination of the details of the Stamp Act
- Patrick Henry's speech, 1765
- Mob violence and the 'Sons of Liberty'
- Repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766

Messages

- The Stamp Act ignited the debate about economic justice and political representation for the colonies, and galvanized opposition to the Crown through popular acts of protest.
- The Stamp Act was the first direct tax on the colonists, levied on all kinds of printed materials.
- Henry's speech expressed the feelings of many in opposition to the Stamp Act, especially the notion of "no taxation without representation"
- Direct taxation led to direct action, not simply words of protest. This action is an example of the popular involvement in events leading to the Revolution.

Interpretive objectives

- Convey the reasons for and scale of the outrage at the Act among many colonists, and the equal indignation of the Crown at such resistance.
- Illustrate the kinds of material affected by the Stamp Act, and how the Act would consequently have affected different people.
- Convey the main arguments around the Stamp Act and the sense of the impact of Henry's speech, and the evocative use of language.
- Convey sense of the anger and popular action against the Act. Understand why it was this that was the main cause of repeal of the Act.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Objects, examples of stamped items.
- (2) Interactive: mechanical stamping machine with coin slot. Pay a token amount (10 cents) to stamp your own broadsheet.
- (3) Touchscreen multimedia program.
- (4) In-gallery program: "Eyewitness" account, in which an interpreter delivers Patrick Henry's speech.
- (5) An audio-visual evocation of the attack on stamp duty collector Andrew Oliver's house in Boston (Oct. 1765) with elements of scenic reconstruction.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #2

Location

Zone 1

Topic

The Boston Massacre, 1770.

Messages

- This event illustrates the tensions breeding in, and is a contributor to the later flashpoint around Boston.
- It is a key example of how an event was used by both sides to justify later actions and so conveys the message that there were many ways to view events at the time, and there are many ways to interpret them now.

Interpretive objectives

- To present a study in opposing viewpoints.
- To demonstrate the importance of propaganda and the moulding of perception.
- To demonstrate the complexity of the story, as one which is not characterized by entrenched and clear cut loyalties and motivations (e.g. John Adams, later hero of the Patriot cause, successfully defended the British troops involved in the Boston Massacre incident).

Exhibit concept

- An interactive audio-visual presentation conducted with an interpreter, with supporting graphic areas, to involve visitors in opposing viewpoints and evidence and allow audience participation in deciding the verdict on this incident.

Audio-visual display highlights John Adams defending the Redcoat soldiers, a surprising act by a man who was a later hero of the Patriot cause and the second president of the USA.

Audio-visual experience of the accused Redcoat soldiers.



A scenic assembly of the courtroom environment, with wood-panelled recesses providing accommodation for the participants and graphic elements.

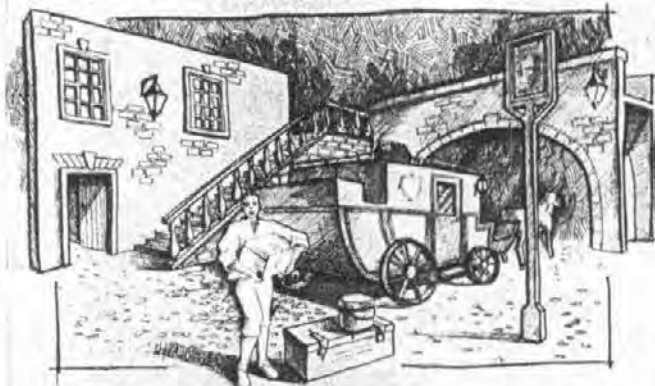
Visitors are involved with opposing viewpoints and evidence, and encouraged with the use of their own resources in coming into the interactive technology area in the gallery.



1



2



3



4

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #3

Location

Interpretive Program Areas

Topic

Various

Messages

- Exact messages will depend on the particular topic.

Interpretive objectives

- To convey a personal "up close" sense of the Revolution through the eyes of historical characters represented by costumed interpreters.
- To illustrate a variety of personal experiences and perspectives.

Exhibit concept

Program areas within the Exhibit Zones can become backdrops for interpreter programs. Elements of historical scenery, echoing the scenery used in the Theater of the Revolution, allow characters in costume to evoke a sense of time and place. These characters can express a variety of perspectives and represent a variety of the diverse people who formed a part of the Revolution story.

For example:

1. A scene set in the shop of a merchant's widow at the end of the Seven Years' War. She explains to visitors how the war has impacted the colonies, reveals her personal, social and economic links with the "mother country", and hints at both the general feelings of loyalty toward Great Britain, and the first stirrings of discontent. The goods around her indicate the kinds of trade she is engaged in, and include those items which are later to figure prominently in the story - tea, molasses, sugar, etc. At the end of her presentation, she ushers visitors out, as she is expecting some customers of "real quality" . . .

2. A scene set in 1765 in a coffee house during the Stamp Act Congress. The vague stirrings of unrest have grown in places to become organized protest. The reasons for this are explained through the eyes of a newspaper editor. He is composing his editorial for the next day's edition and is full of indignation at the affront to his rights as a British subject of the lately imposed taxations, not to mention the damage to his business and those of others. He alludes to those who oppose his view. At the end of his presentation, he requests some solitude to finish his written invective . . .

3. A scene from 1774 at the time of the First Continental Congress and the aftermath of the introduction of the Coercive Acts. Matters are at a crisis point. We learn of the events of the last 9 years and the present situation through the eyes of the African American valet of a delegate to the Congress, who is loading the coach for the return of his master back to his home. He underlines some of the contentions among the delegates, and gives his own view on the notions of freedom, equality, and rights emerging in discussions.

4. A scene set in a print shop where visitors meet a printers' apprentice. He is turning out copies of the Declaration of Independence, and the year is 1776. He explains how Congress has come to this resolution and what he thinks of the views expressed within it. This is the irrevocable break with Great Britain made solid in word and pledge. He also explains that he is thinking of joining the Continental Army, but his parents are opposed to it - they are loyalists. He expands on some of the personal reasons why he, a young single man, might want to go to war, and tries to convey the complexity of motivations for, opposition to, and ambivalence toward the Patriot cause among others of his acquaintance.

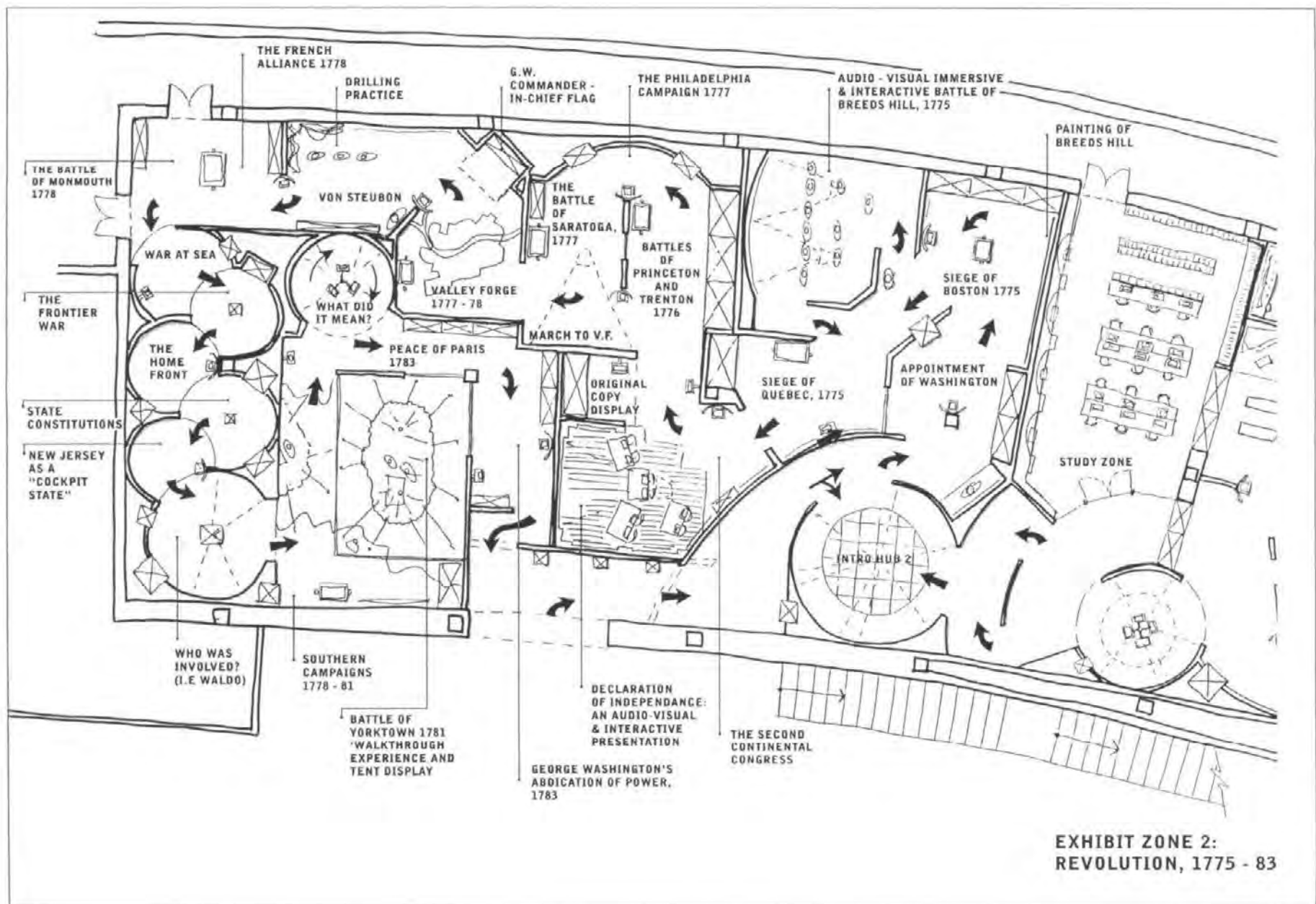


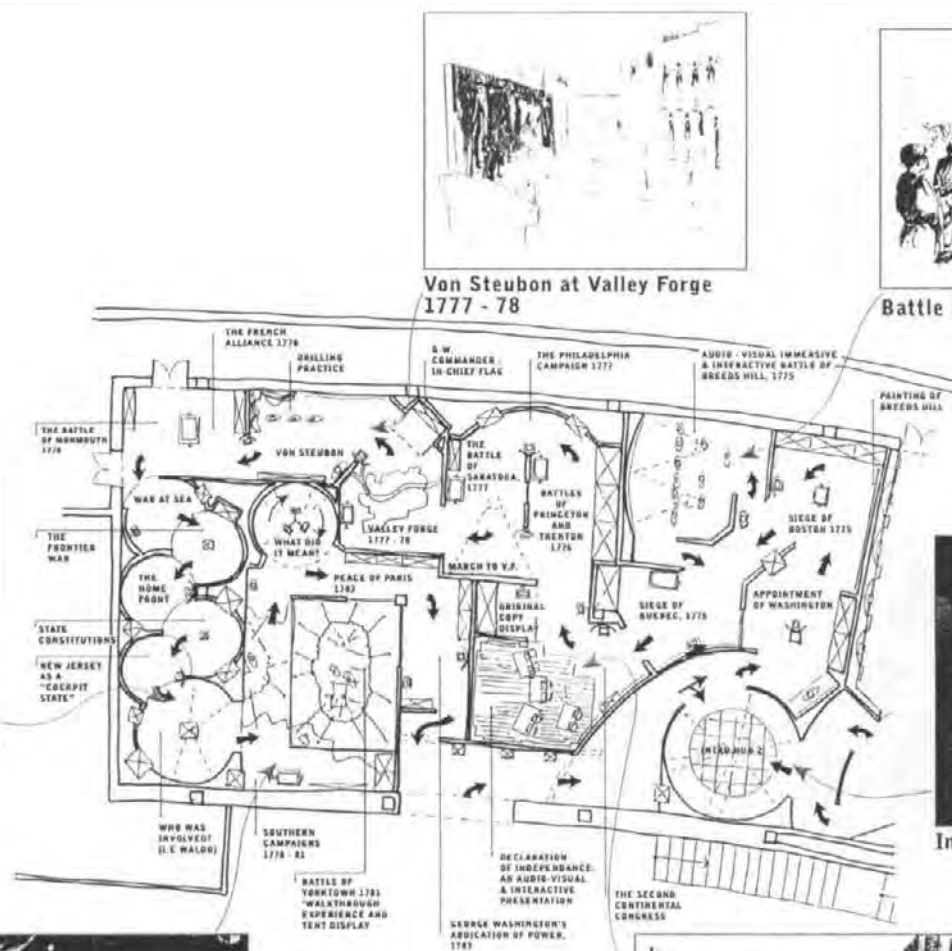
**EXHIBIT ZONE 2:
REVOLUTION, 1775 - 83**



Who was involved?



Battle of Yorktown 1781



Von Steubon at Valley Forge
1777 - 78

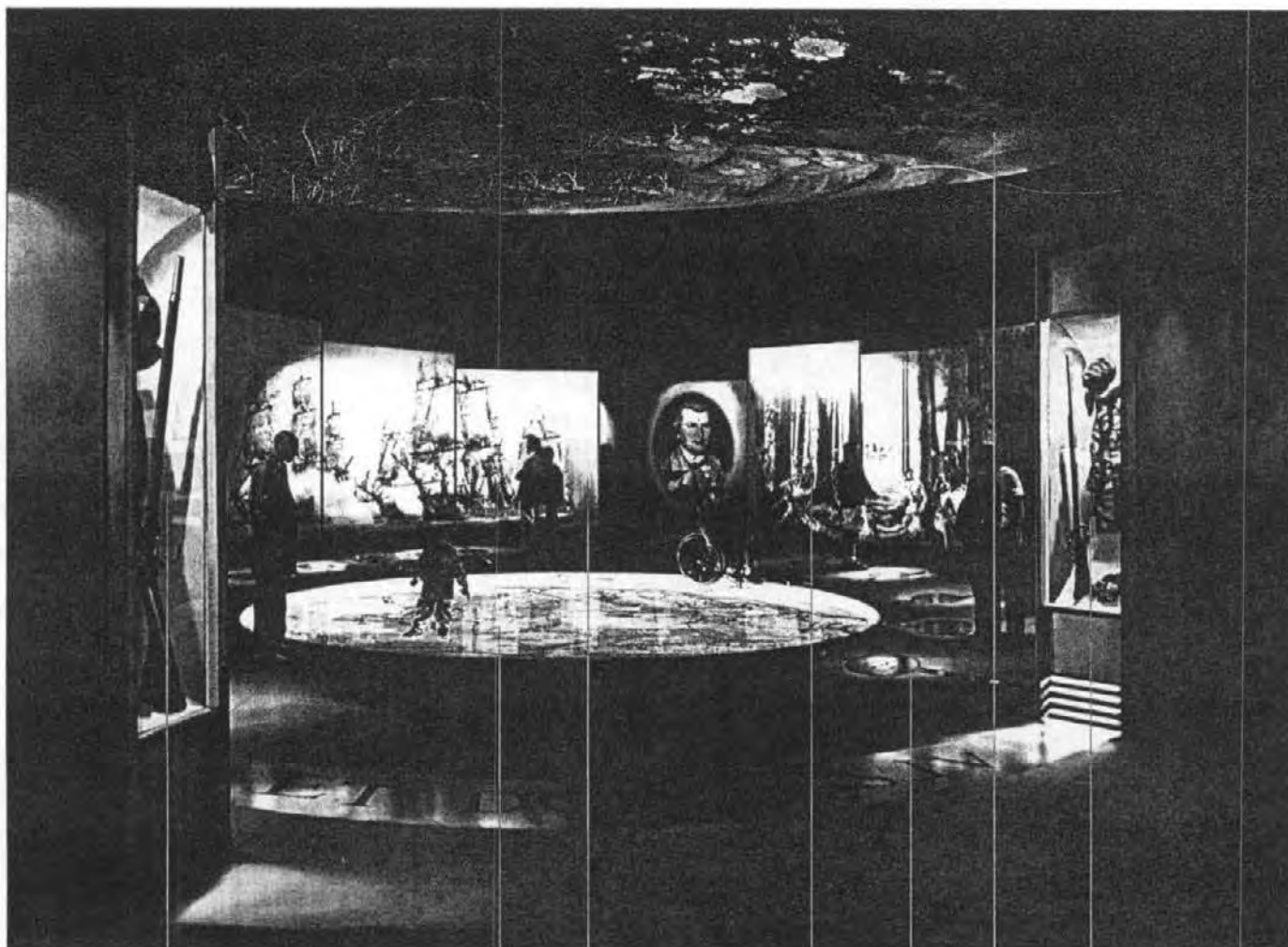
Battle at Bunker Hill



Introduction Hub



Declaration of Independence



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #4

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Introductory area to Exhibit Zone 2.

Messages

- Provides the overview for this Exhibit Zone, sketching the sequence of events, and conveying an impression of the key personalities and issues to be explored.

Interpretive objectives

- Provide a focused introduction to the Exhibit Zone, to give visitors a clear starting point and a brief overall sense of the content of the Zone and the thread of the story.

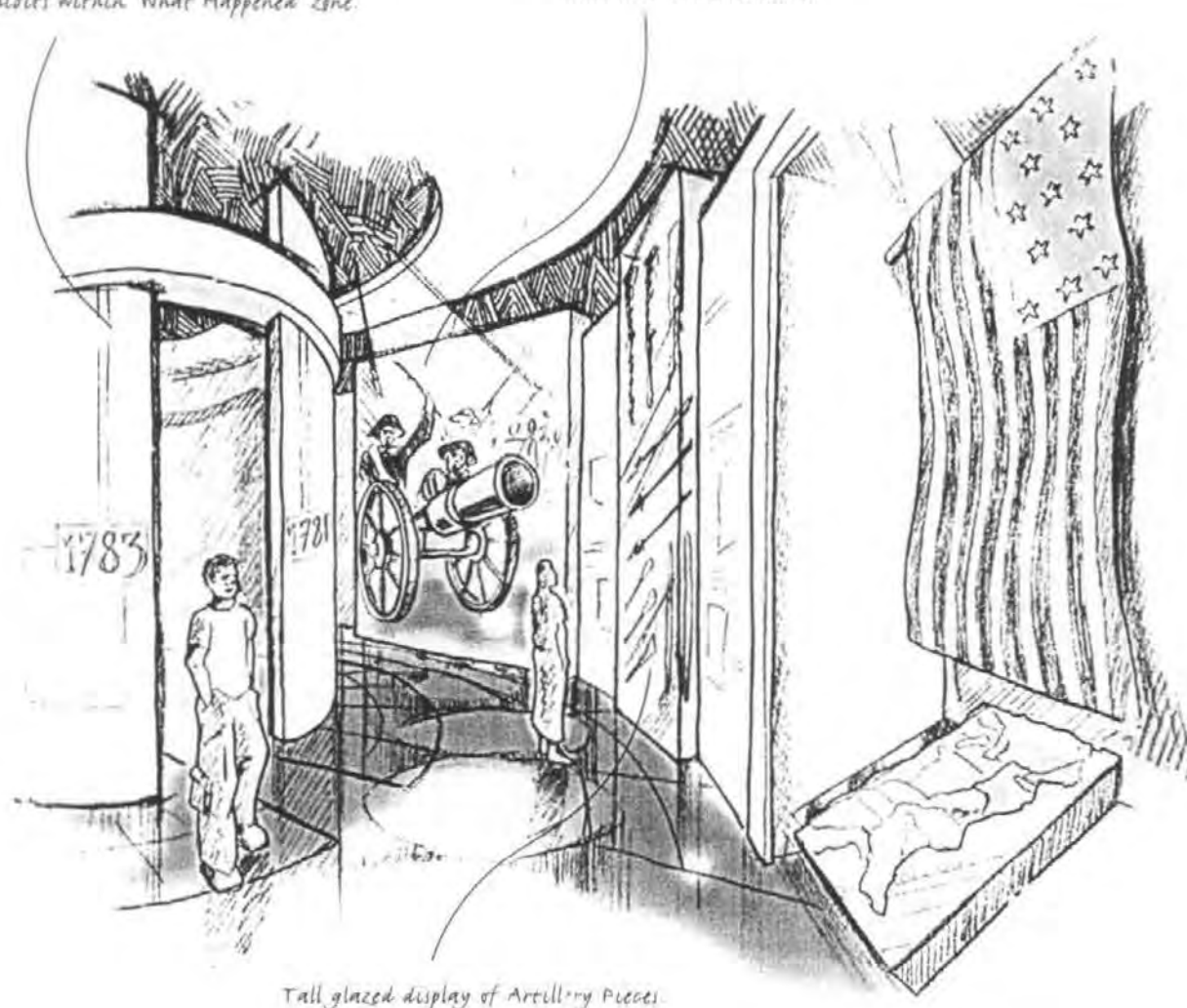
Exhibit concept

Visitors enter a semi-enclosed space. Here, audio-visual projections all around the walls and onto the floor convey key imagery to explain the overall sequence of events to be explored later in the Zone itself. The commentary highlights the key issues. A sense of anticipation and excitement is created by this dramatic introduction. The presentation is brief – a few minutes – and is triggered when visitors enter the space.

1. Recessed displays within the wall panels show soldiers uniforms from each side and the weaponry they used.
2. A glazed floor treatment has illuminated, and changing battle maps and locations of campaigns in outline, below its surface.
3. Moving and changing projected imagery of scenes depicting the war ranging far and wide across the interior of the country, from North to South, on the high seas, and even on the oceans as it took on a global dimension.
4. Bronze floor plates depict a Timeline of dates and events.
5. Projected lighting effects onto the ceiling soffit change mood effects within the Hub.
6. Recessed displays within the wall panels show soldiers uniforms from each side and the weaponry they used.

External face of experimental immersive zone carries a timeline which links across to exhibits within 'What Happened' zone.

Large projection of imagery associated to main events.



Tall glazed display of Artillery Pieces.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #5

Location

Zone 2

Topic

What Happened? area describing the events of this Exhibit Zone (1775-1783).

Messages

- The displays here provide greater detail on the events summarized in the introductory area.

Interpretive objectives

- Provide a topic-based storyline, linked to a broad chronological sequence to cover the events between 1775 and 1783.

Exhibit concept

The introductory area flows into an area which begins visitors' journeys through the storyline in detail. There is a wide range of media in this area: objects, interactives, computer databases, audio-visual presentations, and program areas.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #6 - PART A

Location

Zone 2

Topic

The Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775

Messages

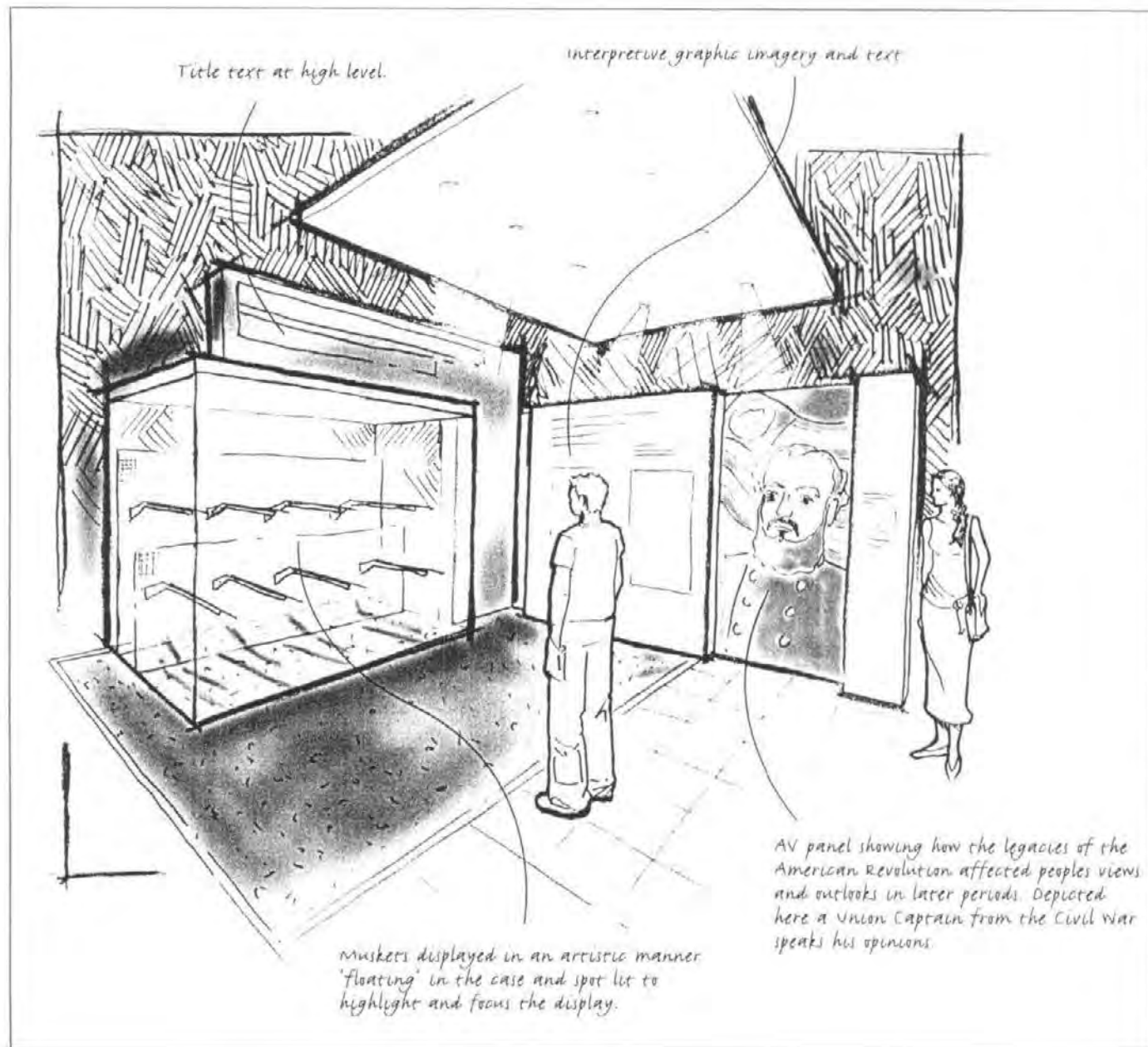
- The battle proved to the Americans that the British in head-on battle were a formidable disciplined fighting force unlikely to be defeated that way
- But it also proved to the British that the Americans were a serious opposition, not easily or lightly crushed

Interpretive objectives

- Convey the bloody nature of warfare and how battles were traditionally fought
- Convey the discipline/impact of the regular British Army
- Demonstrate the initial enthusiasm/tenacity of the Americans
- Convey a sense of what the nature of battle was

Exhibit concept

(1) Muskets from the collections are displayed in "battle" formation, staring out of the case in an upper and lower row in the way that would have confronted the patriots when facing the "thin red line" of the British army. This formation is dramatically put into context, when visitors approach the case. They trigger an audio-visual screen projection which shows the redcoat soldiers in position behind each weapon. On command as visitors get nearer to the case, and as the soldiers can "see the whites of their eyes", they fire in unison by rank. The image of smoke and the sound of the crackle of the musket fire along the line gives visitors an intimate understanding of what it was like to face this enemy on the field.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #6 - PART B

Location

Zone 2

Topic

The Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775.

Messages

- The battle proved to the Americans that the British in head-on battle were a formidable disciplined fighting force unlikely to be defeated that way.
- But it also proved to the British that the Americans were a serious opposition, not easily or lightly crushed.

Interpretive objectives

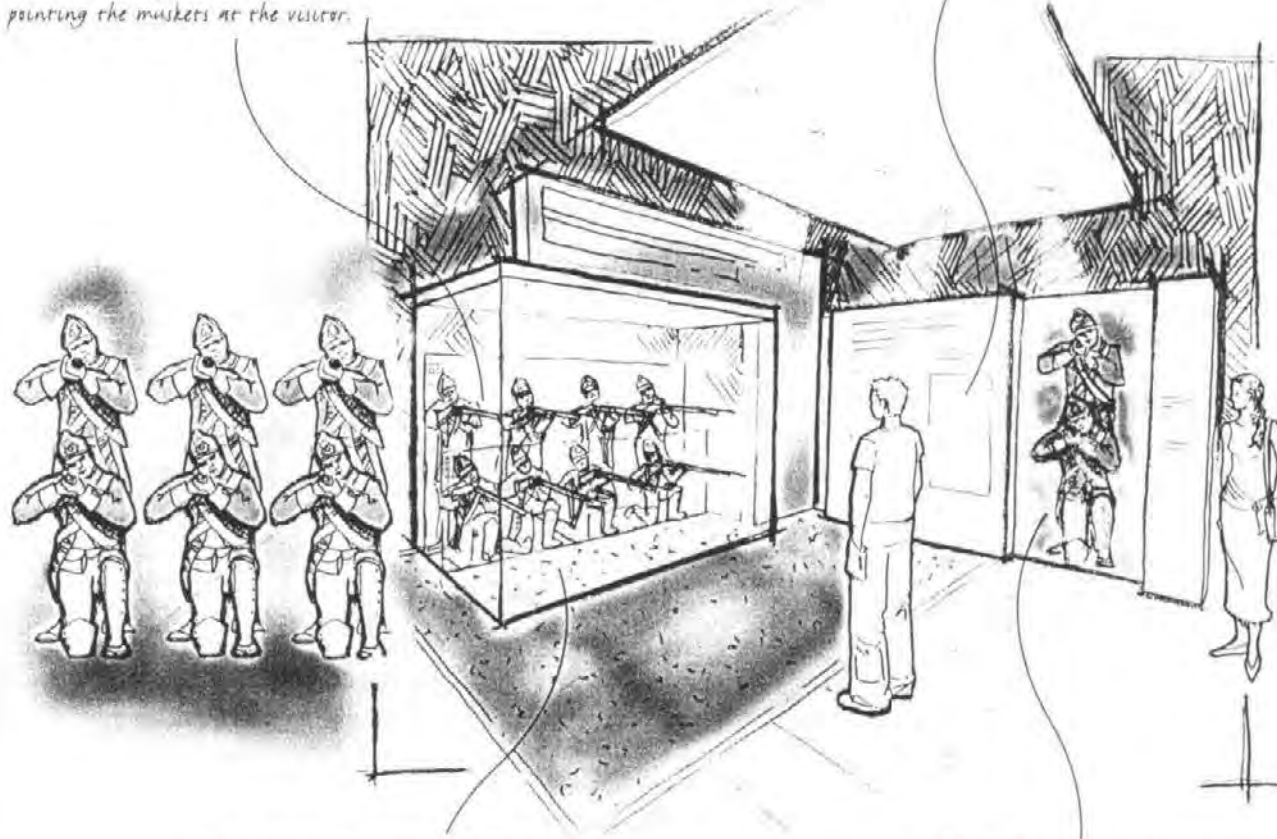
- Convey the bloody nature of warfare and how battles were traditionally fought.
- Convey the discipline/impact of the regular British Army.
- Demonstrate the initial enthusiasm/tenacity of the Americans.
- Convey a sense of what the nature of battle was.

Exhibit concept

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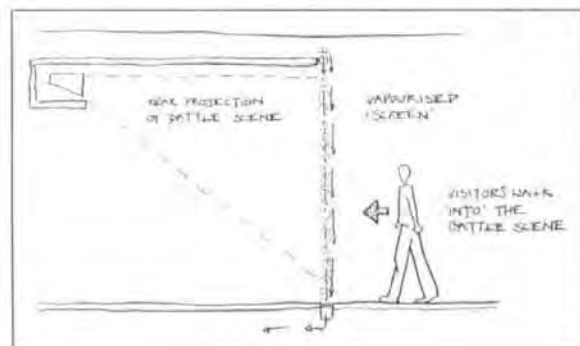
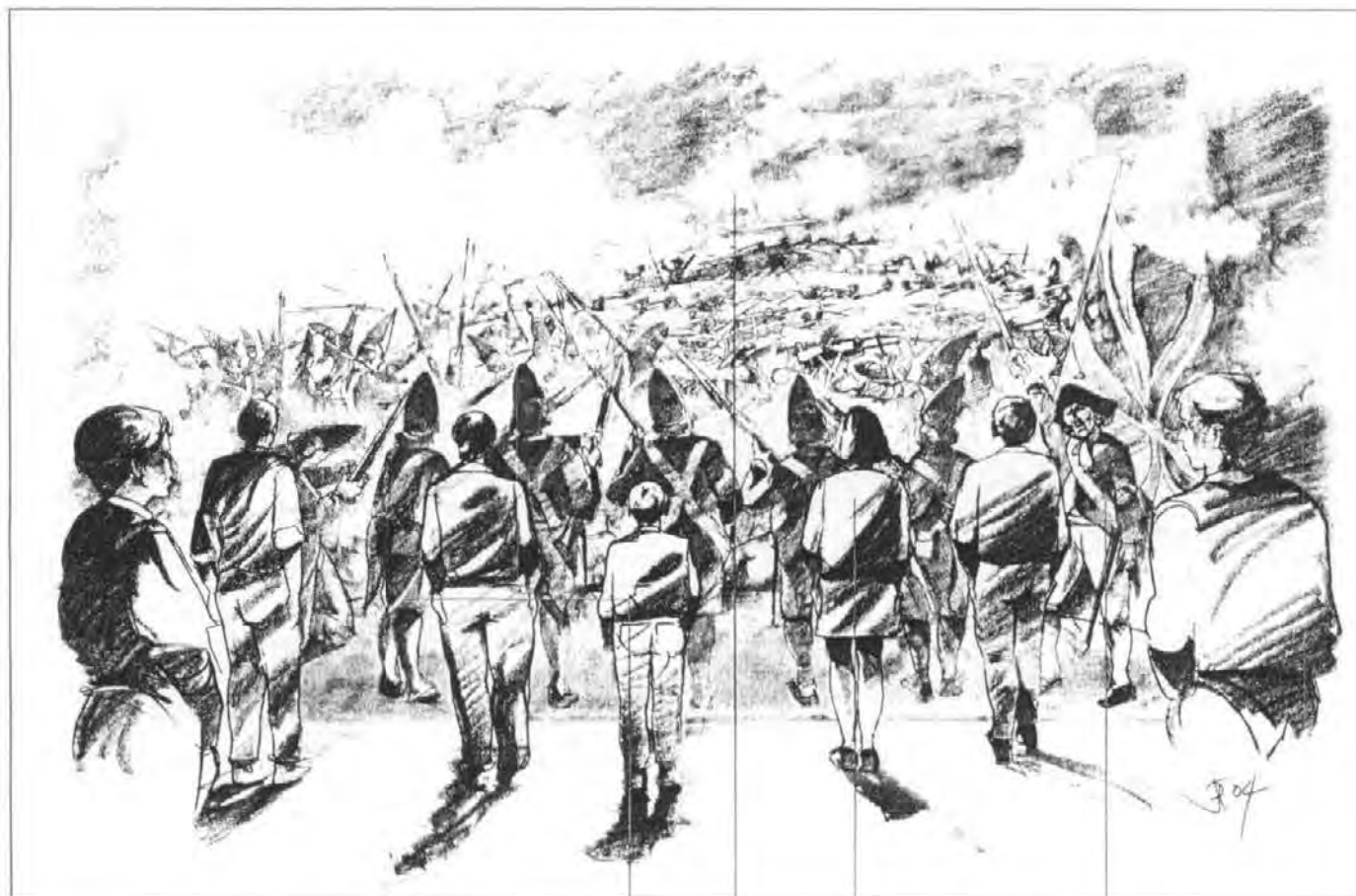
Lighting to the display dramatically changes with projection onto the earlier un-noticable gazebo. This suddenly creates a double rank of British Redcoats pointing the muskets at the visitor.

Lighting in the rest of the exhibit drops to heighten the drama.



The flooring extends out of the case and stops at a line which would be the distance the retaliating patriots would be firing from.

AV changes to that of a battle scene.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #6 - PART C

Location

Zone 2

Topic

The Battle of Breed's Hill and the Siege of Boston, 1775.

Messages

- The battle proved to the Americans that the British in head-on battle were a formidable disciplined fighting force unlikely to be defeated that way.
- But it also proved to the British that the Americans were a serious opposition, not easily or lightly crushed.

Interpretive objectives

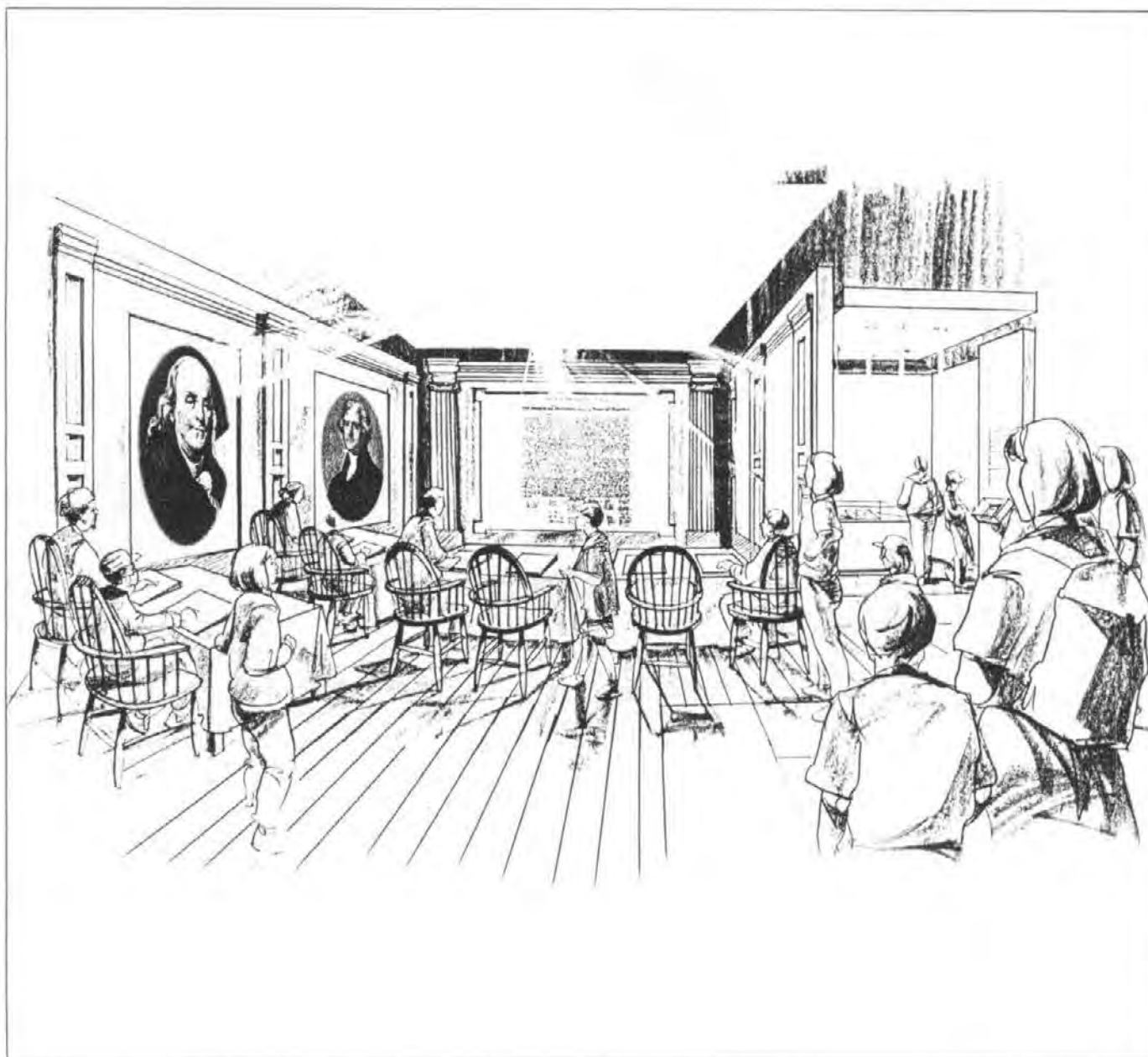
- Convey the bloody nature of warfare and how battles were traditionally fought.
- Convey the discipline/impact of the regular British Army.
- Demonstrate the initial enthusiasm/intensity of the Americans.
- Convey a sense of what the nature of battle was.

Exhibit concept

(2) Experiential battle immersion.

To further support this concept, visitors can enter an audio-visual space which turns the tables. This time visitors are put into the shoes of the redcoat lines. They face a screen which provides a view up Breed's Hill near Boston on that fateful day in 1775, and the backs of the front row of redcoat soldiers, marching in formation and to the beat of the drum up the hill. Musket fire and artillery shot rain down from the patriot positions and the very floor shakes with its impact. As any good disciplined British soldier, visitors are expected to take up the ranks of those who fall in the line of duty in front. And just in case there is any wavering or thoughts of desertion, a British sergeant-major in the form of a costumed interpreter, stands by to shout encouragement and maintain discipline. Woe betide anyone who fails foul of his keen eye and cocked pistol!

1. Digital redcoats standing in line blur the distinction between the projected experience and reality.
2. A video sequenced projection of the Battle of Bunker Hill depicts the scene from the perspective of being in the shoes of an advancing British Redcoat, and the American troops raining down the ammunition towards you.
3. As a visitor you are immediately put in the shoes of an advancing Redcoat, and have to fill gaps in the line when a soldier in front falls. Visitors do this by walking through the projection screen - which is in fact a wall of vapor. In effect, they feel like they are walking "into" the Battle.
4. An interpreter dressed as a British Officer shouts at the visitors to stand in line and advance.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #7

Location

Zone 2

Topic

The Declaration of Independence, 1776

Messages

- The Declaration marks the final, irrevocable break with Britain
- It embodies the highest ideals of the American Republic
- It sets out the political and moral case for independence
- It is a classic work of literature
- It demonstrates the importance of words in the development of the Revolution and creation of the American Republic

Interpretive objectives

- Explain how and why the Declaration was written and issued
- Explain what it meant and means, as a statement of the Revolution, and as the basis for a new political order
- Convey a sense of the contemporary and continuing impact of the document's ideas and language - its "electrifying words"
- Explore some of the myths surrounding the document
- Get "close" to the document, physically and emotionally
- Suggest that the "pen could be mightier than the sword"

Exhibit concept

- (1) Object: one of original copies of document is displayed.
- (2) A major audio-visual presentation explores the document in a highly visually exciting and entertaining way, by using a virtual version of the Declaration. This virtual version is literally "opened up" using computer graphics trickery to show how we can "read between the lines" of the words. For example, what are its authors really claiming? What does the form of words used to conclude the document signify? What ideas seen here can we still see all around us today?
- (3) Objects: display of 18th-century writing sets/pens from the collections which symbolize the supreme power of words.
- (4) Objects: key publications/documents form the collections, such as letters written by George Washington to Congress, military orders, political broadsheets, coded messages, and the lyrics of popular ballads.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #8

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Popular reaction to the Declaration of Independence, 1776

Messages

- The Declaration marks the final, irrevocable break with Britain.
- As such its impact was immediate and dramatic. Widespread celebrations among patriots met its dissemination.

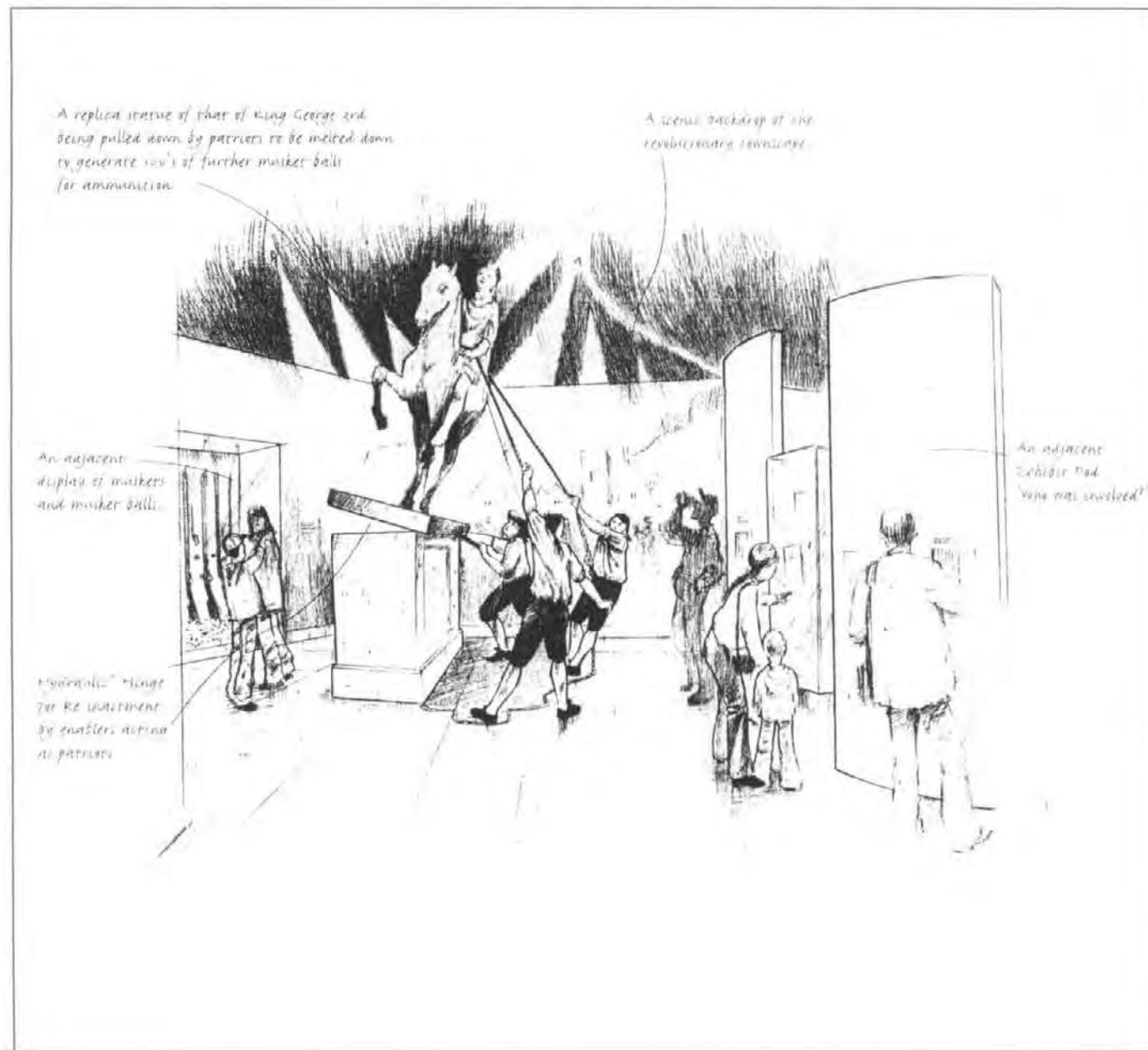
Interpretive objectives

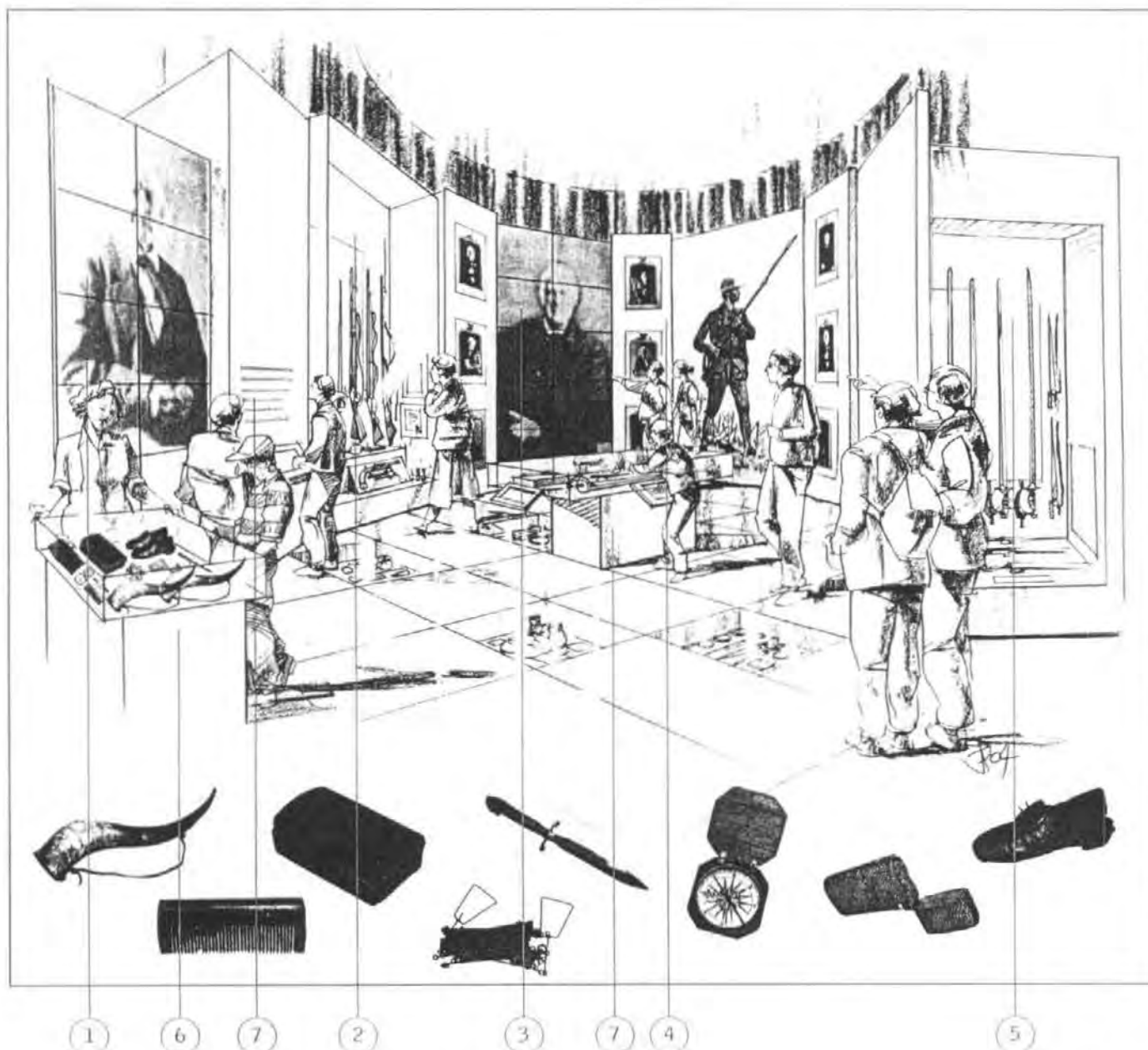
1. Explain the depth of popular feeling that accompanied the Declaration of Independence.
2. Use a dramatic example of popular reaction to illustrate this.
3. Involve the visitor in a piece of "theater" within the gallery spaces.

Exhibit concept

(1) Program presentation: a group of costumed character interpreters re-enact an event from the Revolution to engage visitors directly with this topic. When the Declaration of Independence was read to the Continental Army occupying New York in July 1776, there was a celebration. This spilled over into a keenly symbolic act, when a mob at the Bowling Green tore down a lead statue of King George III, and chopped off its head. The statue was subsequently melted down and used to make ammunition. Interpreters here "tear down" such a statue by virtue of a hydraulically powered simulation. They involve visitors in the drama of this moment.

(2) Object displays: adjacent displays show musket balls and muskets to make the connection between this event and the ongoing needs of the Continental war machine, especially in the precarious bear-pit of New York City, which was soon lost to the British for the remainder of the war.





SAMPLE EXHIBIT #9

Location

Zurich

Topic

Soldiers' equipment.

Messages

- It is possible to get a sense of the personal experiences of the Revolution through the personal equipment of soldiers. Many items in the collection have been personalized by soldiers with their names, initials or designs and drawings.

Interpretive objectives

- Engage visitors with the people of the Revolution through their personal possessions.

Exhibit concept

Here visitors see two very special powder horns — containers made from cattle horns to hold gunpowder. These two horns are both personalized with engraved words and designs — by the same individual, one Jabez Rockwell. Rockwell was at Valley Forge, and, evidently, having lost his powder horn here for traded it, he got another to replace it. By chance, both ended up in the collections here (one at the National Park, one at the Valley Forge Historical Society). They are now united again here in the American Revolution Center.

Visitors see a dramatization of Jabez Rockwell's experience, a hypothetical account of how he came to leave two carved powder horns down to us through 230 years of history.

A supporting display nearby shows the start of a Study Area, where other examples of powder horns can be compared.

1. Large audio-visual presentations that fade in and out images and photos of old Revolutionary Soldiers.
2. Display of weaponry and personal possessions.
3. Large audio-visual presentations that fade in and out images and photos of old Revolutionary Soldiers.
4. Further photo's of the Men who were actually there: Waldo, Downing, Cook etc.
5. Display of weaponry and personal possessions.
6. Objects on highlighted display that relate to specific personal stories.
7. Surrounding and central databases give further information about the artifacts and the men who used them.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #10

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Command and Reorganization at the Valley Forge Encampment, 1777-78

Messages

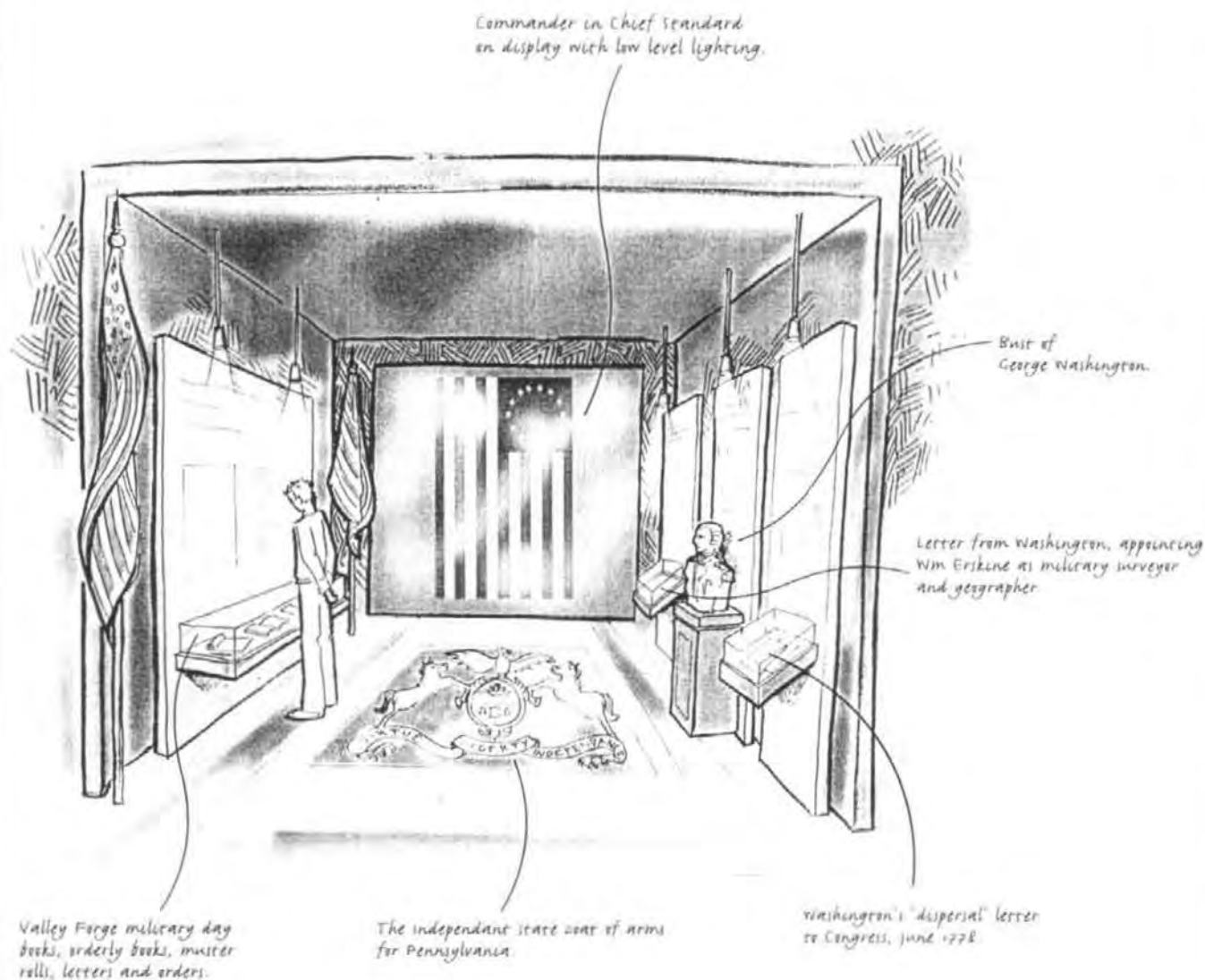
- It was George Washington's practical and symbolic leadership which kept the Continental Army together during the testing time of the Valley Forge encampment.
- Major reforms in the organization, as well as the training, of the Army effected during the encampment helped to turn the tide of the War.

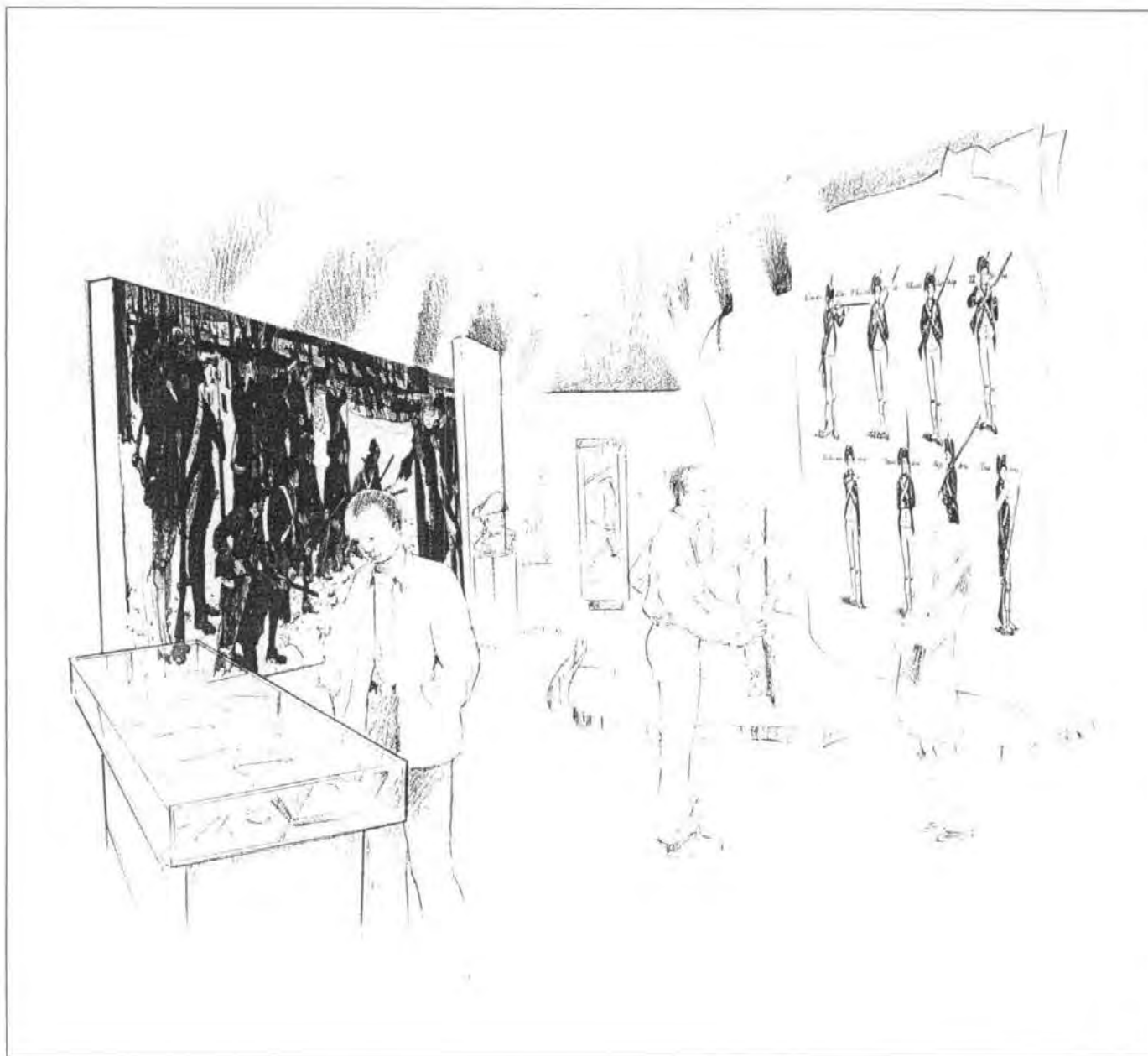
Interpretive objectives

- (1) Emphasize the role of George Washington at Valley Forge
- (2) Explain how day-to-day command was carried out
- (3) Explain the key aspects of military reorganization addressed at Valley Forge
- (4) Explain the development/refinement of the Continental Army organization.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Object: a display of the Commander-in-Chief standard. This is a major, rare object with personal connections to George Washington, and symbolic of his leadership.
- (2) Objects: display of Valley Forge military day books, orderly books, muster rolls, letters, and orders.
- (3) Object: a display of the "dispersal" letter written by George Washington to Congress from Valley Forge in December 1777, warning them that without supplies and support, the Army had no future.
- (4) Object: Display of a letter from George Washington appointing William Erskine as military surveyor and geographer, June 1778. Surveying was vital to the effective planning of military campaigns.





SAMPLE EXHIBIT #11

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Training the Continental Army

Messages

- The Valley Forge encampment in 1777-78 was a turning point in the training of the Continental Army, injecting much greater discipline, and unifying commands and drill into one system across all brigades and regiments.
- The training was regularized in written, published form - this is one of the ways we know exactly how the soldiers were trained.

Interpretive objectives

- Explain the role of Baron Von Steuben in training the Army
- Explain the nature of the new training - the specifics of the drilling
- Engage visitors with this training and give them a sense of the kind of disciplined movement which was needed to be an effective fighting force in the 18th century.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Object: display the thank you letter written by George Washington to Von Steuben for his services in training the Army
- (2) Object: display the 1st edition of Von Steuben's military manual, which shows the diagrams and illustrations used by the Army in training
- (3) Invite visitors to copy the drilling manoeuvres of Von Steuben. Visitors enter a giant sculptural version of the Von Steuben manual, where the illustrations of soldiers' moves are created as life-size cut-out graphic exhibits for visitors to stand in front of and copy.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #12

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Valley Forge: life in camp

Messages

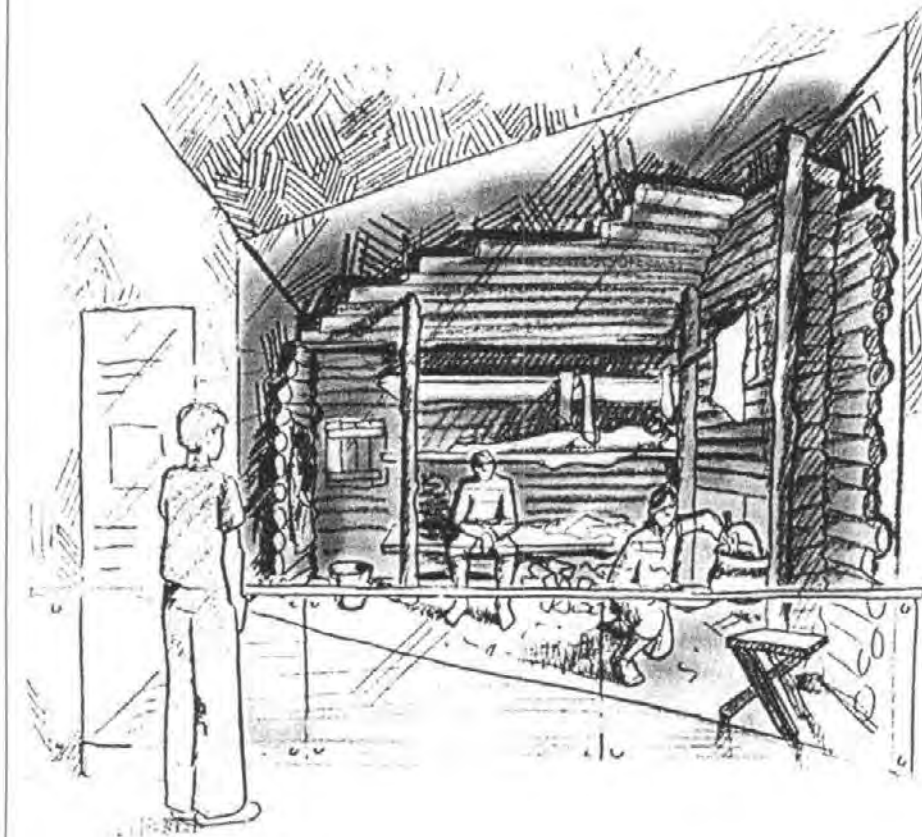
- The conditions for soldiers at Valley Forge, though not the worst of the war, were hard enough.

Interpretive objectives

- Allow visitors to get a sense of the daily lives of soldiers, preparatory to them seeing programs and exhibits in the real landscape of Valley Forge.

Exhibit concept

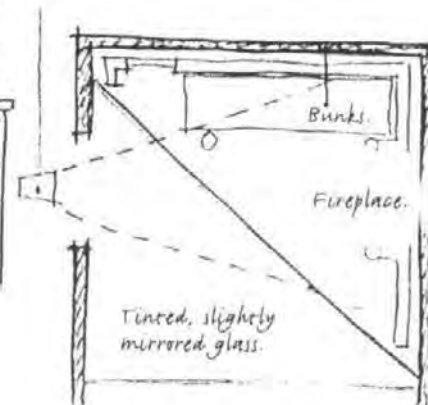
A small section of reconstructed log hut is dressed with period items from the collections and sits behind glazing. Through use of mirrors and projection, video sequences with interpreters or actors appear overlaid onto this setting, placing people into the scene. Visitors effectively feel like they are "eavesdropping" on the conversations between the soldiers so depicted, whose slightly ghostly presence is in itself evocative.

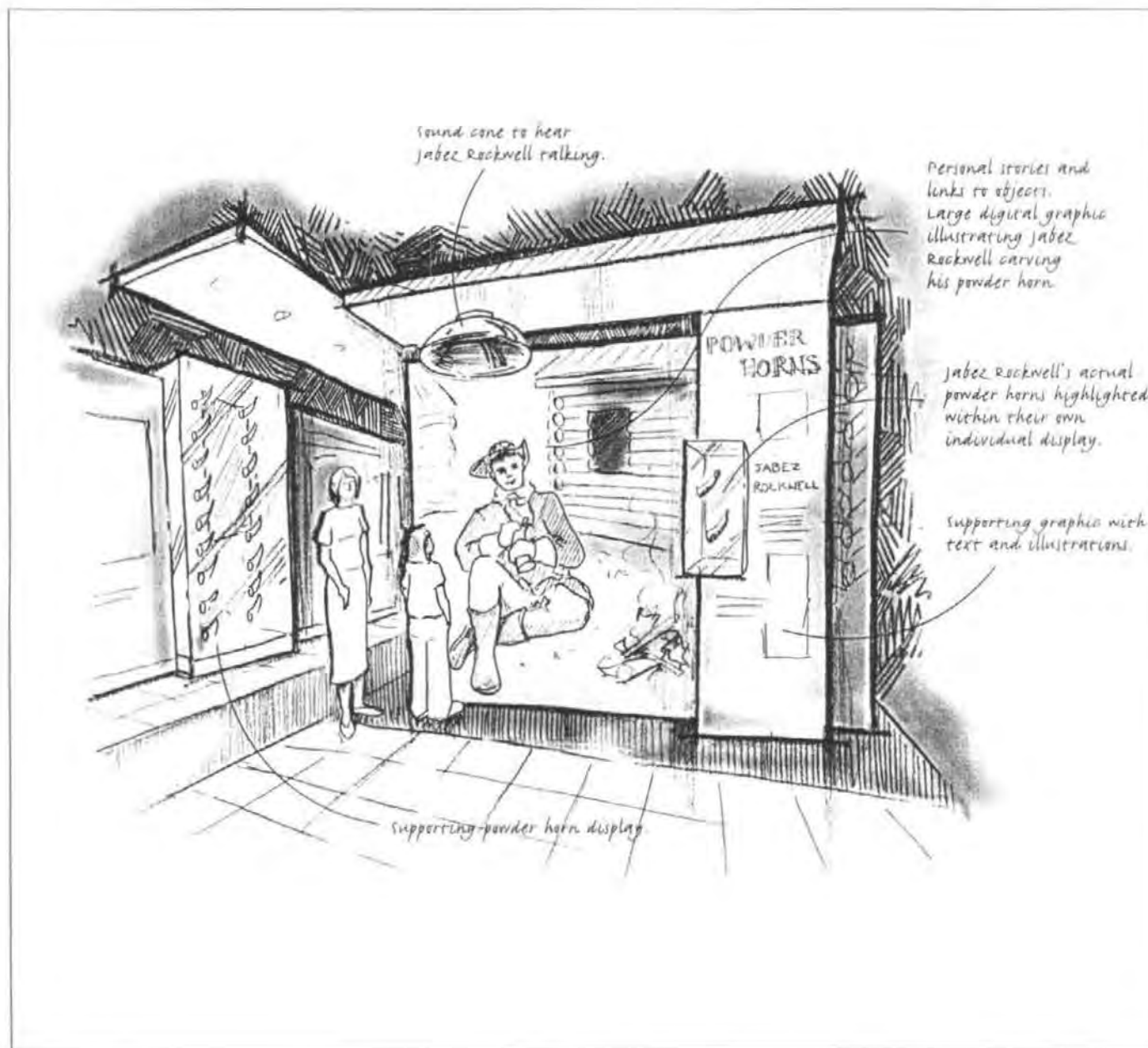


Partially reconstructed hut

Life within the hut with animated characters is projected by a concealed projector. These are seen on the 'invisible' glass but to the visitor they appear to be in the hut.

When there is no projection visitors can see the detail within the 'empty' hut.





SAMPLE EXHIBIT #13

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Soldiers' equipment

Messages

- It is possible to get a sense of the personal experiences of the Revolution through the personal equipment of soldiers. Many items on the collections have been personalized by soldiers with their names, initials or designs and drawings.

Interpretive objectives

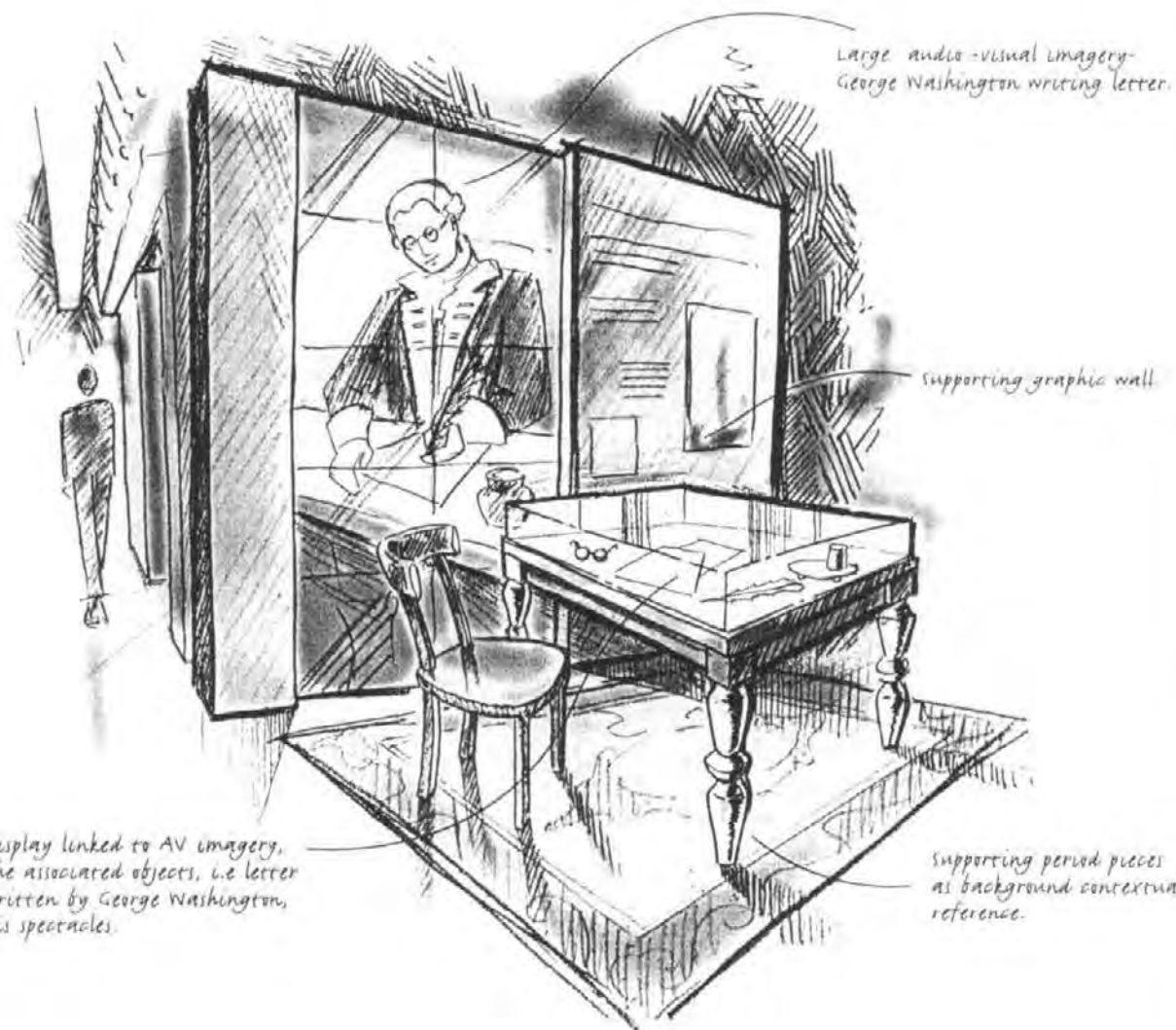
- Engage visitors with the people of the Revolution through their personal possessions.

Exhibit concept

Here visitors see two very special powder horns - containers made from cattle horns to hold gunpowder. These two horns are both personalized with engraved words and designs - by the same individual, one Jabez Rockwell. Rockwell was at Valley Forge, and, evidently, having lost his powder horn there, he got another to replace it. By chance, both ended up in the collections here (one at the National Park, one at the Valley Forge Historical Society). They are now united again here in the American Revolution Center.

Visitors see a dramatization of Jabez Rockwell's experience, a hypothetical account of how he came to leave two carved powder horns down to us through 230 years of history.

A supporting display nearby shows the start of a Study Area, where other examples of powder horns can be compared.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #14

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Civilian control and military command

Messages

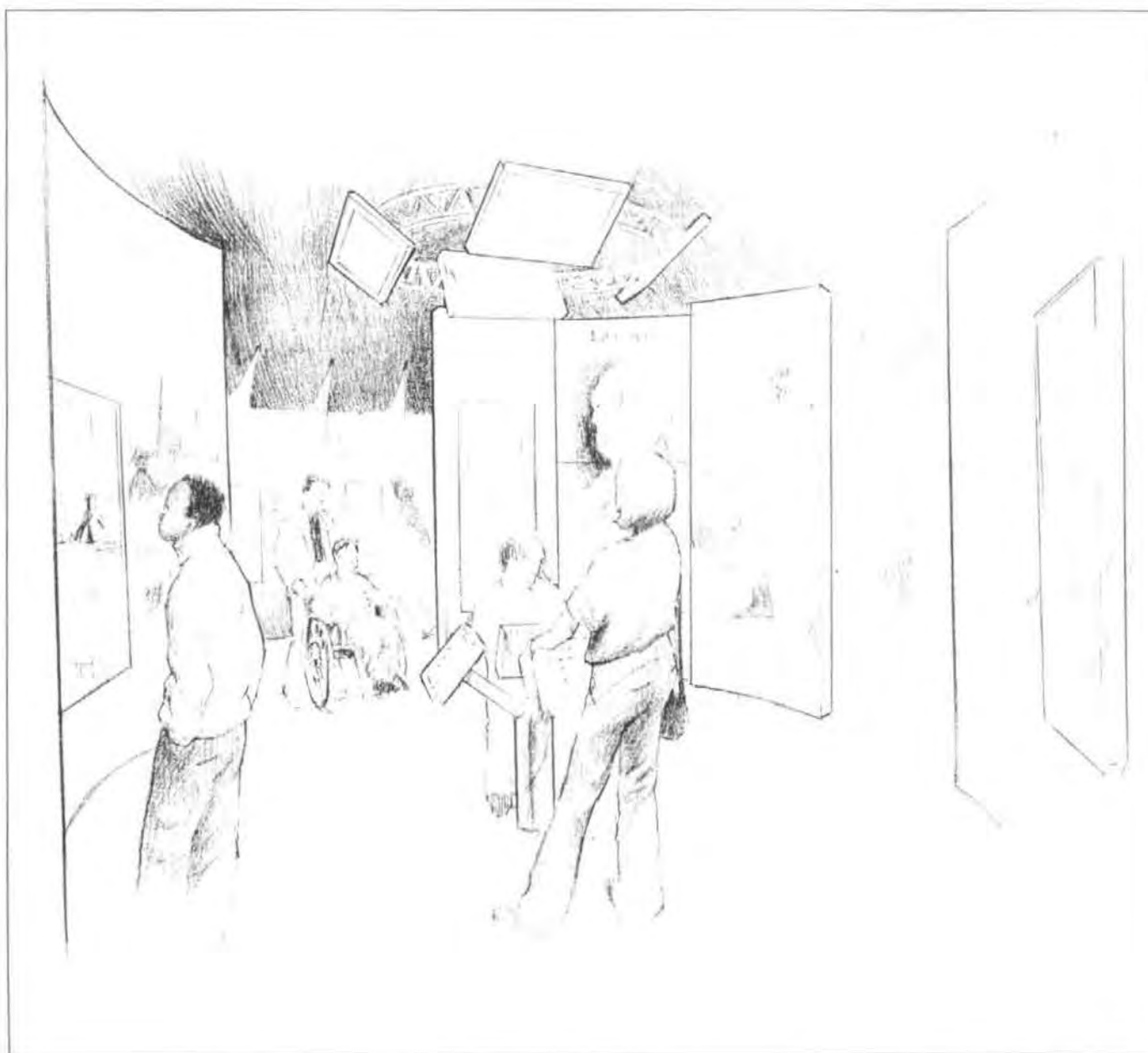
- George Washington's strength as a leader was his ability to bridge the gap between the military and civilian spheres. This required diplomatic skills, and a careful and continual process of communication to the Army and to Congress.

Interpretive objectives

- Allow visitors to understand the importance of the personal role of George Washington in unifying the aims and objectives of the political and military organizations of the nascent United States.
- Allow visitors to get a sense of the personality of Washington in this regard through an examination of his writings, and getting close to the real documents written in his own hand.

Exhibit concept

Documents from the collections are displayed using exhibit cases which are suggestive of the 18th-century context. For example, a case can look like a writing desk. This is supported by a video presentation, which allows visitors to see how and why these documents came to be written, and what the effect and significance of them was. For example, here is depicted a display of George Washington's dramatic letter to Congress in December 1777, warning them that the Army would disperse if it did not receive the supplies and support it so desperately needed. This video presentation also allows visitors to hear the documents speak – in this case an actor speaking the words of George Washington. The overall effect is to make what could otherwise be dry and difficult objects suddenly come to life.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #15

Location

Zone 2:

Topic

Who was involved? (typical example)

Messages

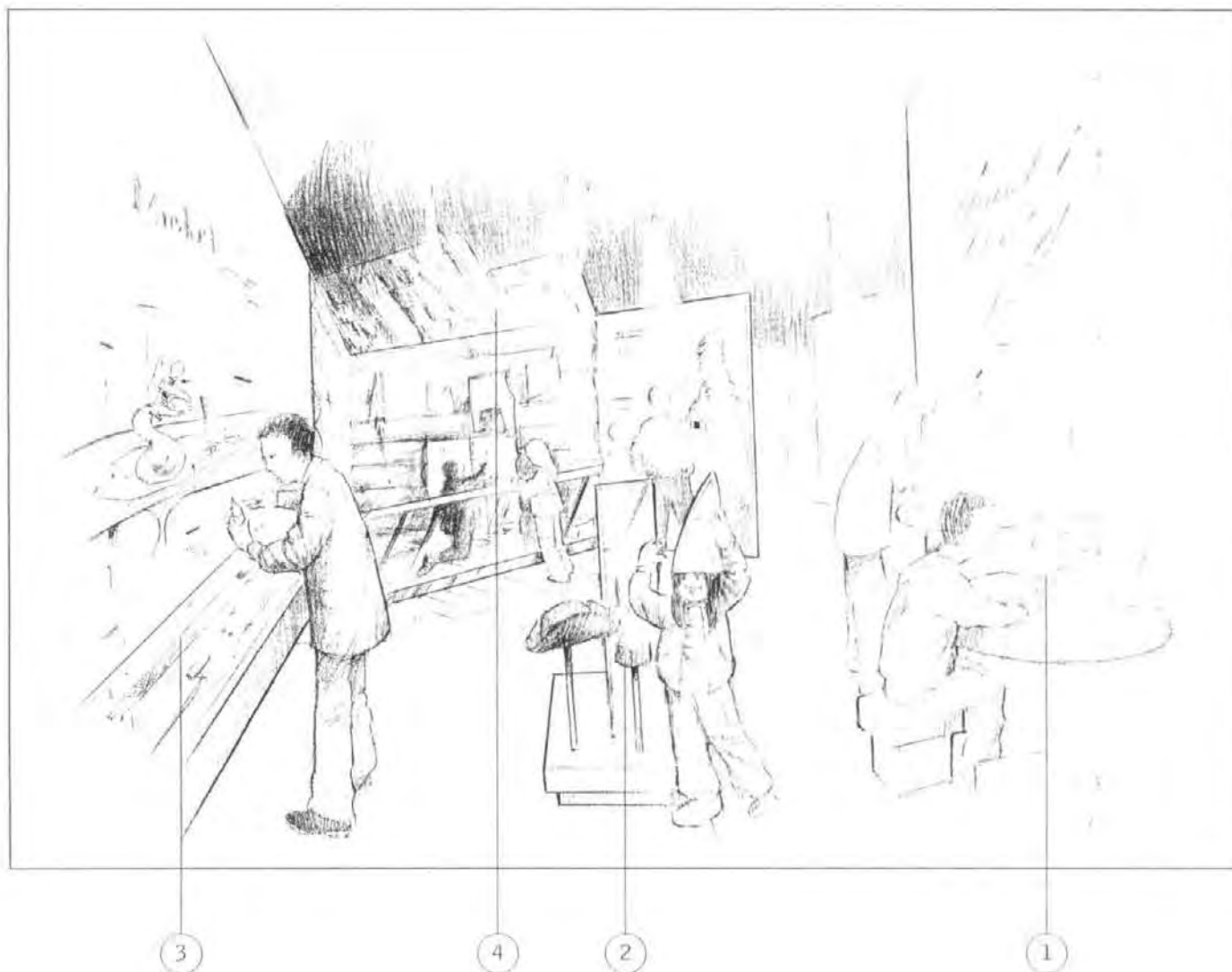
- Many people from all kinds of cultural and social backgrounds formed part of the story of the Revolution
- Looking at the personal experiences of some of these individuals allows us to make connection to our own lives and experiences in often surprising ways, and to see the Revolution not just as a great event of history, but as a personal and immediate drama.

Interpretive objectives

1. Provide an in-depth support exhibit area which looks at a number of significant individuals involved in the adjacent topic exhibits. These individuals will be significant either because important to the story as leaders, or, important to the story because their experiences have come down to us through objects, folklore, documentary sources or imagery. In other words, it is a mixture of the famous and the ordinary.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Audio-visual and IT exhibits: a number of historical characters can be quizzed and their lives examined using these exhibit touchscreens.
- (2) Object displays: adjacent displays show personal objects associated with these individuals, providing near-tangible links to past human tragedy, triumph and spirit.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #16

Location

Zone 2.

Topic

Interactive Learning Area (typical example)

Messages

- History is a participatory, not a passive area for study. Learning about the past means questioning it with minds, hearts, and hands.
- Here, all of those aspects can be accessed through a variety of interactive exhibits linked to different learning styles.

Interpretive objectives

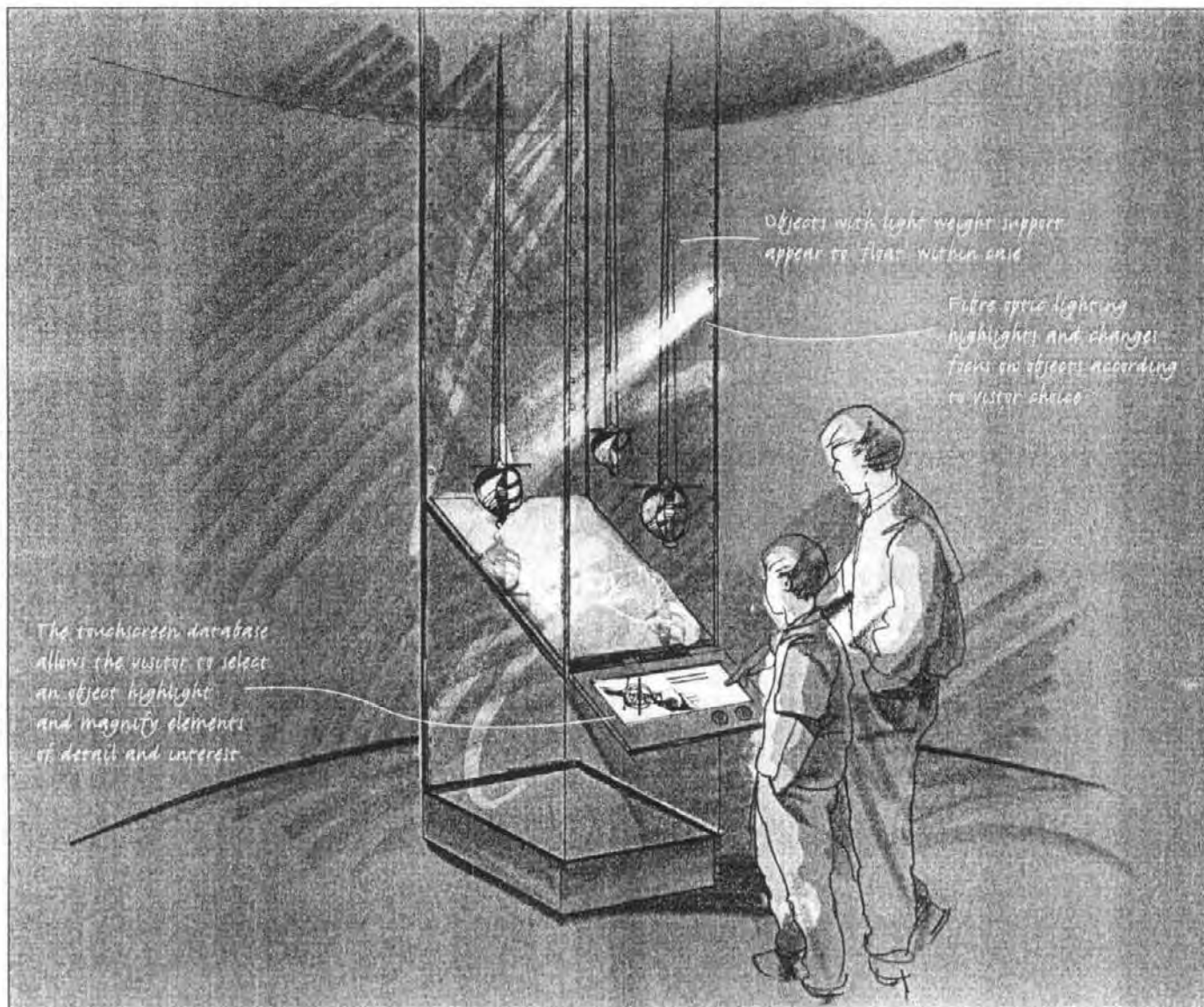
1. Provide an in-depth support exhibit area which uses interactive exhibits to provide hands on in-gallery learning experiences, aimed at encouraging family participation and cooperation.

Exhibit concept

(1) The Interactive Learning Areas contain self-directed activities which allow visitors in individually or in small groups to solve puzzles, create, or play. There is a range of interactive exhibits to suit all ages and levels of interest, including:

- Have a go at writing in the 18th-century style with a quill pen.
- Design your own broadsheet attacking or defending the Stamp Act
- Put together the pieces of a replica 18th-century musket
- Build a model log hut
- Try on a tricorn hat, a British Grenadier's headgear, or a Hessian helmet.

- Have a go at writing in the 18th Century style with a quill pen.
- Try on a tricorn hat, a British Grenadier's headgear, or a Hessian helmet.
- Piece together the various parts of a replica 18th Century musket.
- A partial reconstruction of an interior of a log hut. Through special AV techniques the soldiers and fire come to life.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #17

Location

Zone 2

Topic

"Aesthetic" object display (typical example)

Messages

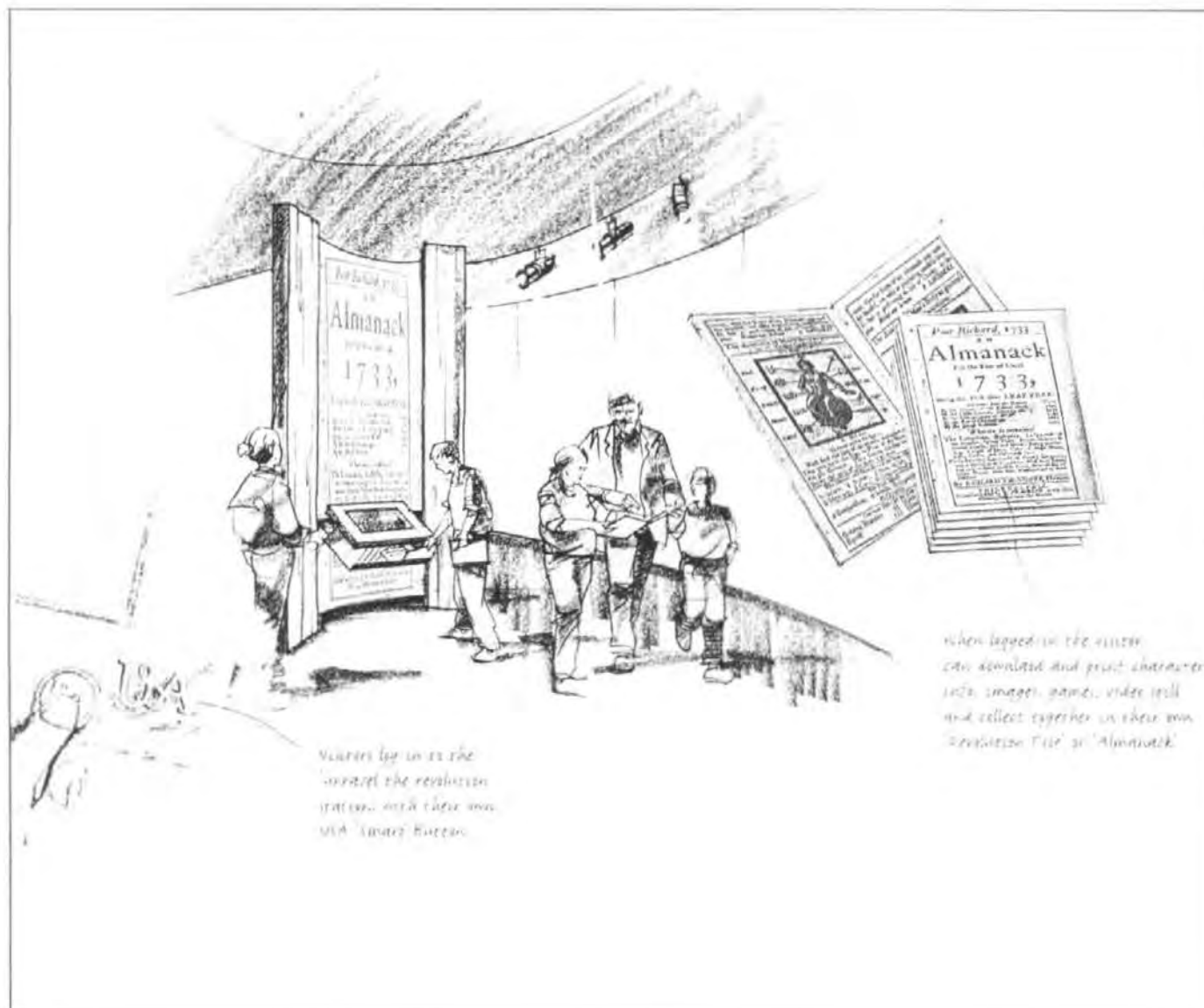
- Objects can be admired in their own right for their beauty, elegance or expression of human nature.

Interpretive objectives

1. Provide some object displays which do not use a highly contextual 18th-century backdrop to explain their meaning. Instead present the objects in ways calculated to provoke questions in visitors' minds and lateral thinking about the Revolution. For example, why were weapons made to kill people crafted with such care and decorated so elaborately? What does this tell us about the nature of war and military ideals in the 18th century? Or about their owners?

Exhibit concept

- (1) Objects: displayed so that lighting and atmosphere are maximized to make the objects stand out as precious and fascinating pieces of history and, in some cases, of art too.
- (2) IT database: further information and 18th-century context for the objects is discrete so as not to overpower the impact of the objects themselves. It is presented via an interactive touchscreen which allows visitors to explore all aspects, angles and details of the objects shown, as well as links to their owners, uses and significances.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #18

Location

All zones

Topic

"Smart Button" log-in exhibit (typical example)

Messages

- Messages will vary according to individual exhibits.

Interpretive objectives

1. Provide opportunities for visitors to record their visit experiences, and learning outcomes as a take-home souvenir.

Exhibit concept

(1) Visitors receive at the start of their visit their individual smart-technology buttons. These "Smart Buttons" store information digitally. They are used by visitors to gather information from the exhibits, and to interact with the exhibits. Throughout the exhibits, visitors can use their "Smart Buttons" to interact with the exhibits. They log into exhibit stations and download information, games, quizzes, images, and video sequences into their own personalized Revolution Files or "Almanacks". They can email these files home to themselves, or get print-outs of parts of their file in the Conclusion Zone. Visitors can also store their scores and results from interactive exhibits using their Smart Buttons, so that when they return on a later visit, they can see if they can improve these scores. The exhibits themselves will "talk back" to visitors, welcoming them by name and suggesting things that they might like to explore or exhibits that they have not yet visited.

The buttons are modeled on the uniform buttons of the Continental Army, bearing the legend "USA". These buttons were some of the first symbols of the self-declared independent United States of America, examples of which are in the collections.



This interactive "Battle Map" table can be tilted by the visitor to reveal the movement of the armies over different time periods.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #19

Location

Zone 2

Topic

Interactive battle-map (typical example to be used for various key battles).

Messages

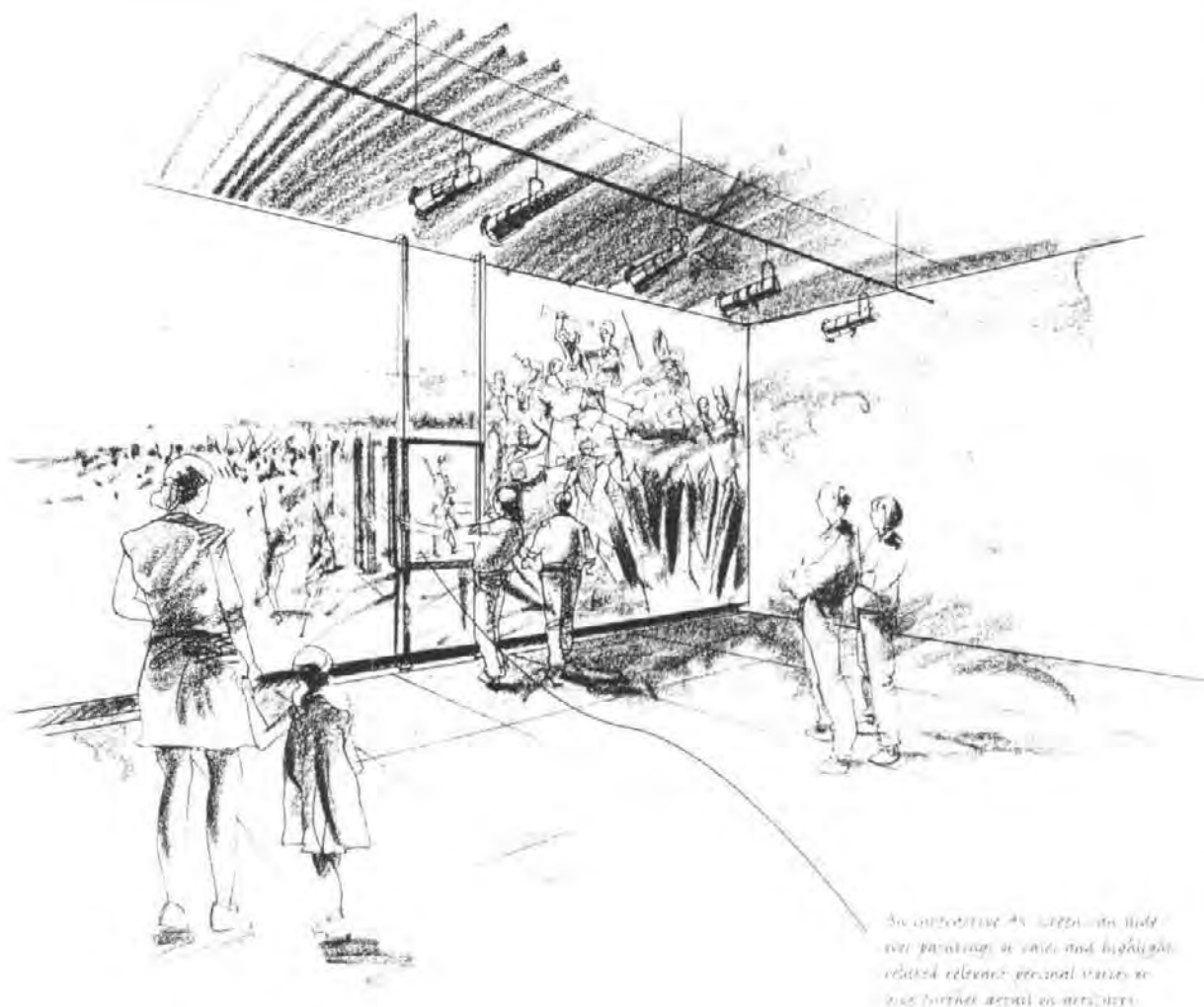
- Strategy and tactics were crucial to the course of battles and skirmishes during the war.

Interpretive objectives

1. Provide opportunities for visitors to try their own hand at battle strategy and tactics.

Exhibit concept

(1) Interactive exhibit: visitors touch and tilt a digital screen at table-top level to view a computerized map of a particular battle, and to plot troop movements. They can test their own skills as commanders with those of the real generals – and see where they went wrong, or right by comparing their own results to the real outcomes of the battles.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #20

Location

All zones

Topic

Interactive Audio-Visual screen (typical example to be used for various images and objects).

Messages

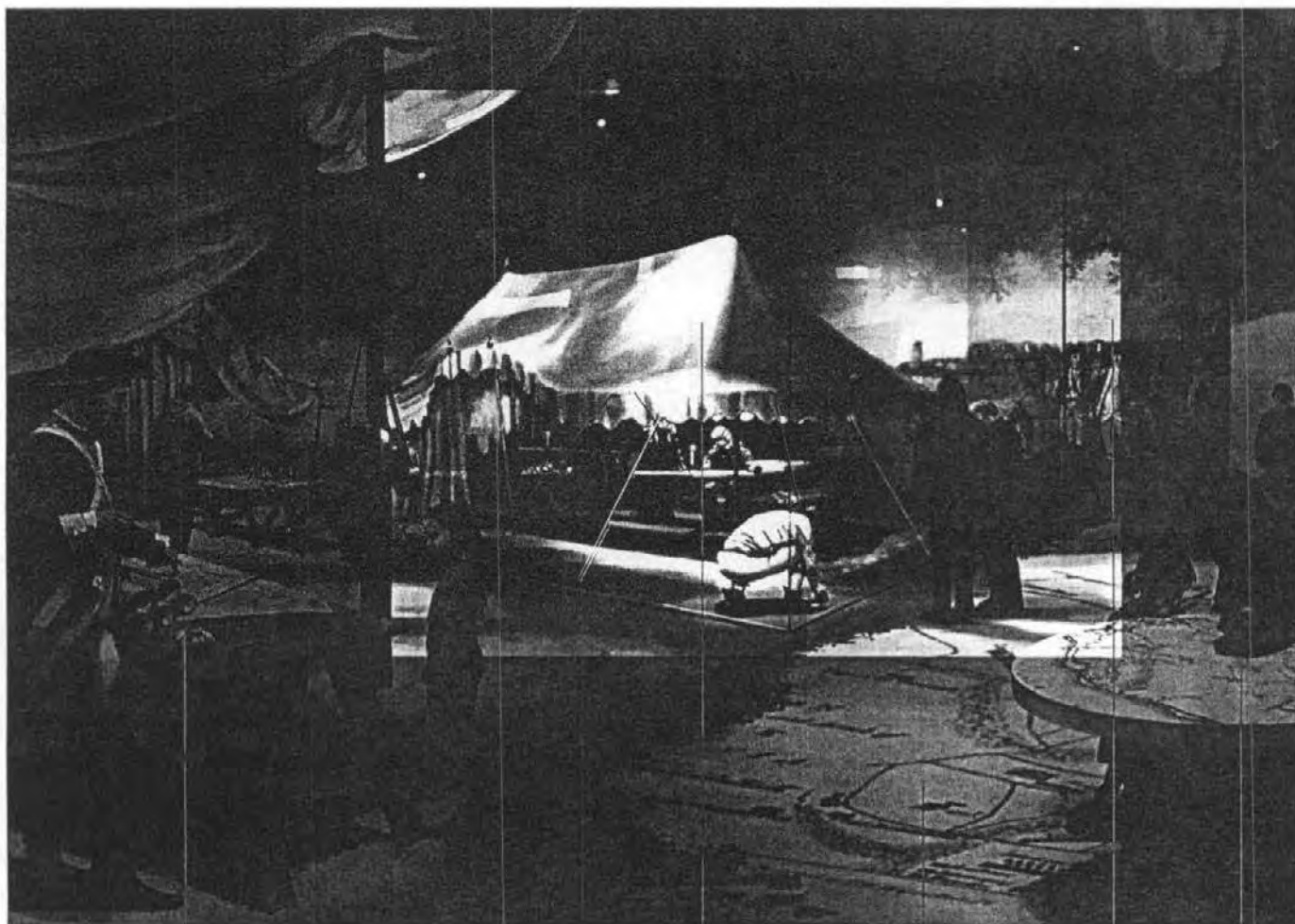
- Will vary with the individual object or image to be explored.

Interpretive objectives

1. Provide opportunities for visitors to examine in more-depth a key image (painting, map, illustration, portrait) or object (especially large objects such as a statue or cannon), and to relate these to dramatized video accounts of associated personal experiences.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Interactive exhibit: visitors move the interactive audio-visual screen over and around an image or object. As the screen moves, its position relative to the object is computer-tracked so that "hotspots" appear on the screen. If these are touched, further information, video sequences, music, or magnified detail of the object in question appear. This allows visitors to quiz the image or object in as much detail as possible.



1

2

3

4

5

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #21

Location

Zone 2

Topic

The Allied Siege of and British Surrender at Yorktown, 1781

Messages

- This major American and French victory over the British marked the effective end of the War.

Interpretive objectives

- Explain how and why this was the crucial victory.
- Get visitors close to this defining moment through the iconic objects from the collections.

Exhibit concept

(1) Within a carefully climate controlled enclosure, and within dramatic, low light levels, visitors encounter the personal sleeping marquee of George Washington, as used by him at the siege of Yorktown. As visitors take in this awe-inspiring object – a very rare survival from the period – they are also aware that the tent is “coming to life”. Sound effects and subtle shadow lighting give the impression that General Washington is in the tent, discussing matters of importance late into the night with his aides. We see their flickering shadows and hear their deliberations on the eve of this momentous event. In this way, this iconic object, one of the “stars” of the collections of the American Revolution Center, is re-animated and personalized, with the very human drama it represents made dramatically clear.

1. Scenic reconstruction extends out from the glazed perimeter of the case to include the visitor in the period setting.
2. An iconic object is Washington's Marquee, in which he slept at the siege of Yorktown. Here it is brought back to life within a scenic setting and with mannequin representations of Washington and his aides discussing matters of the siege. Within the tent are further artifacts which may have been used by the men at this time.
3. A recreation of the battlenap of Yorktown appears as a floor feature.
4. Backdrop flats show paintings which illustrate Washington at Yorktown.
5. An interactive 'Battle map' table allows the visitor to lift and turn to move the troops as they wish and compare the results they achieve to the pre-programmed depiction of how the troops moved and were victorious or defeated on the day.

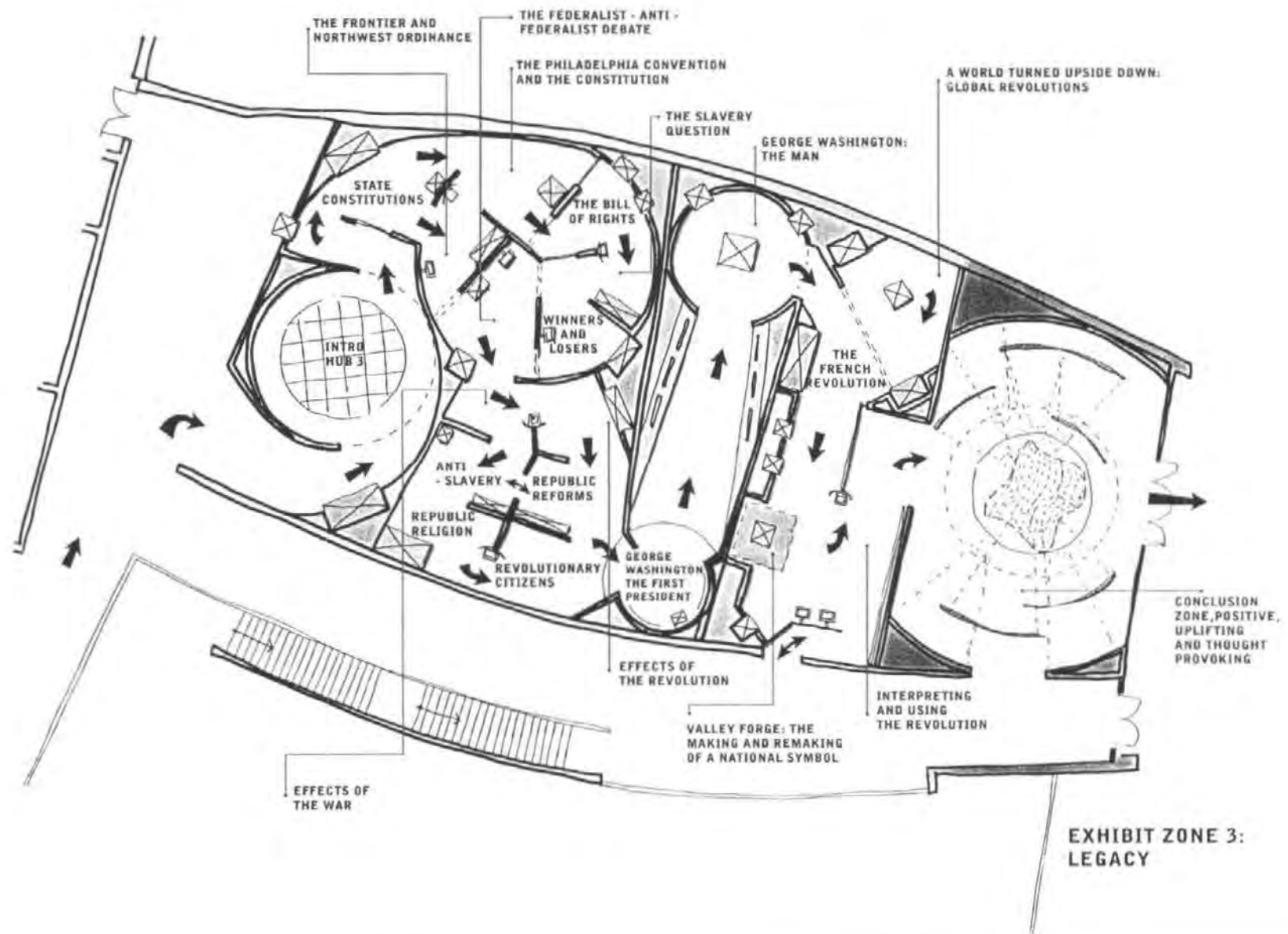
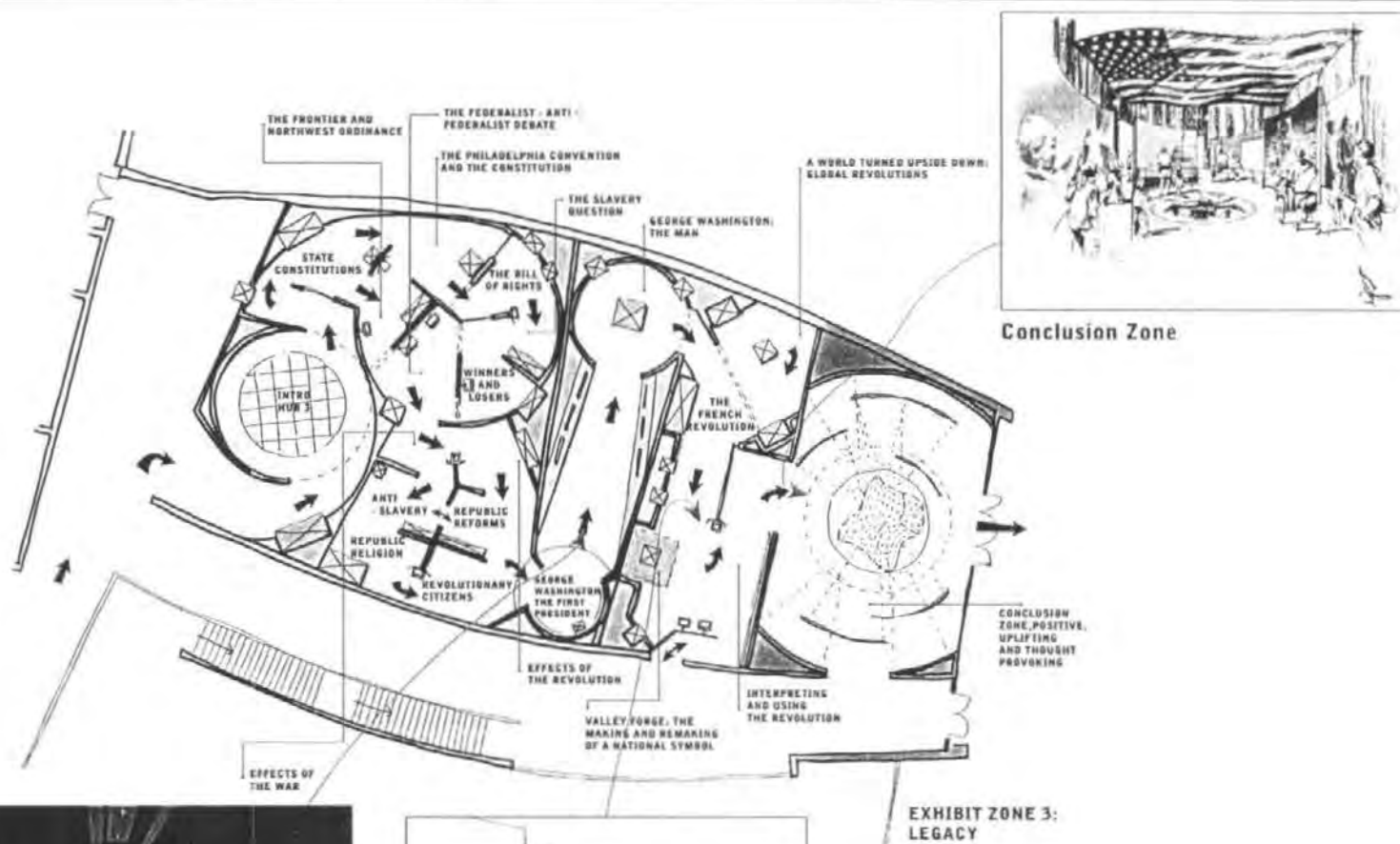


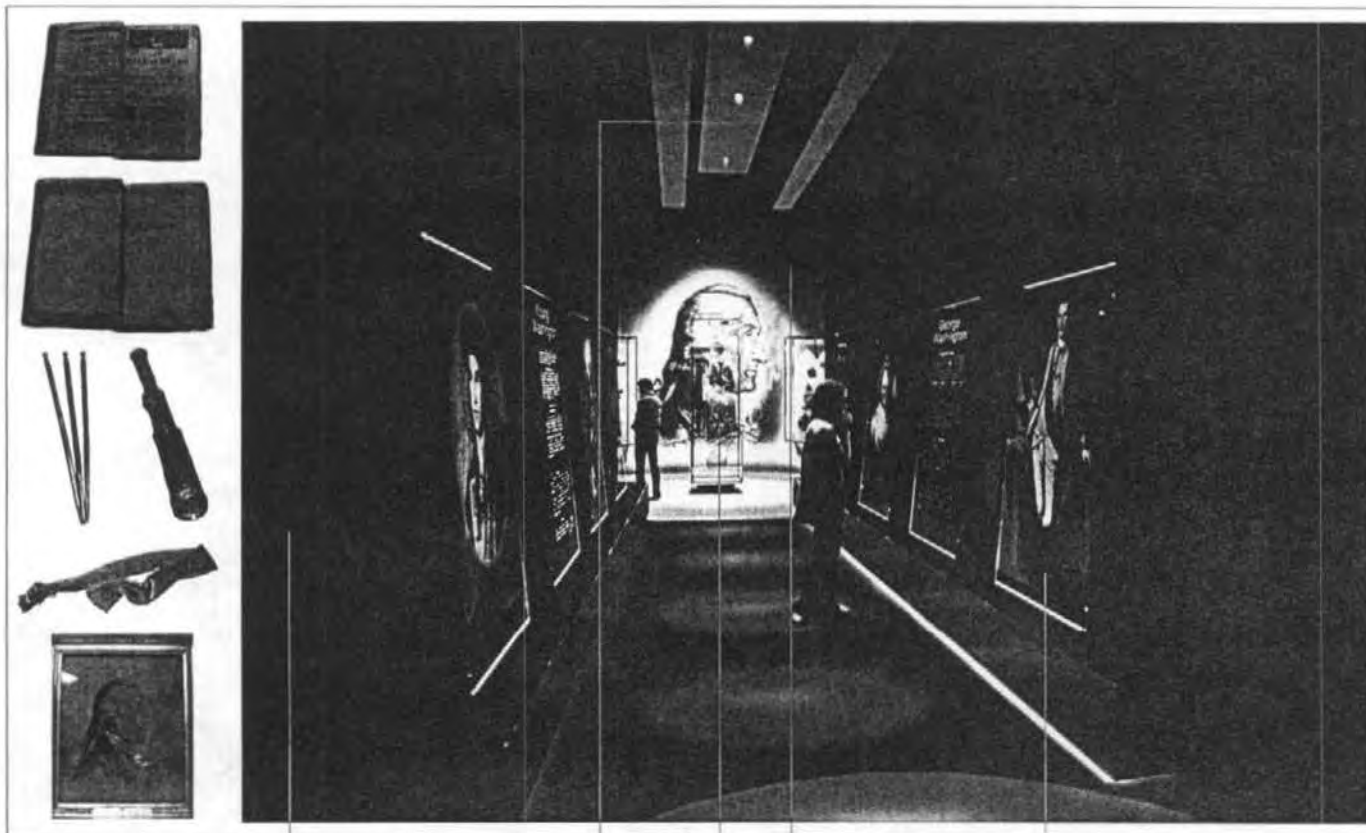
**EXHIBIT ZONE 3:
LEGACY**



George Washington
The First President



Valley Forge: The making and
remaking of a national symbol



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #22 - PART A

Location

Zone 3

Topic

George Washington: Man and Myth

Messages

- George Washington is a legendary figure and consequently it can be hard to discern what he was like as a man. It is possible to come closer to both the man and the legend through his personal possessions and objects associated with him.

Interpretive objectives

- Convey a sense of both Washington the man (the human scale of his possessions, the personal details they tell us about him) and the myth (the way Washington has been idolized, the fact that he is one of the great leaders of history).

Exhibit concept

- (1) Objects: a display of Washington's breeches and waistcoat, silver camp cups, and medicine chest. These are highly significant, rare objects with personal connections to Washington. This exhibit area is intimate and like a treasury, to underline the sense of getting close to the real man.
- (2) Objects: a display of objects connected to the people around George Washington, including a set of china, belonging to George Washington Craik, and *An Help and Guide to Christian Families*, a copy of a book written by Martha Washington and signed in her own hand.
- (3) Object: a portrait of Washington by Joseph White (Drawn from life, 1790).
- (4) Object: a bust of Washington by Houdon.

1. Glazed etched panels flank the approach to Washington: The Man display. They portray images, quotes and text in a chronological sequence of his life.
2. Lowered soffits and soft focused lighting creates an intimate atmosphere as visitors get closer to finding out about what Washington was like as a person.
3. A central display of Washington's clothes and objects.
4. Visitors enter the drum where they feel closer to who Washington was, as they see his own personal objects and discover the related personal stories to who he was.
5. Glazed etched panels flank the approach to Washington: The Man display. They portray images, quotes and text in a chronological sequence of his life.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #22 - PART A

Location

Zone 3

Topic

George Washington: Man and Myth

Messages

- George Washington is a legendary figure and consequently it can be hard to discern what he was like as a man. It is possible to come closer to both the man and the legend through his personal possessions and objects associated with him.

Interpretive objectives

- Convey a sense of both Washington the man (the human, scale of his possessions, the personal details they tell us about him) and the myth (the way Washington has been idolized, the fact that he is one of the great leaders of history).

Exhibit concept

- (1) Objects: a display of Washington's breeches and waistcoat, silver camp cups, and medicine chest. These are highly significant, rare objects with personal connections to Washington. This exhibit area is intimate and like a treasury, to underline the sense of getting close to the real man.
- (2) Objects: a display of objects connected to the people around George Washington, including a set of china, belonging to George Washington Craik, and An Help and Guide to Christian Families, a copy of a book written by Martha Washington and signed in her own hand.
- (3) Object: a portrait of Washington by Joseph White (Drawn from life, 1790).
- (4) Object: a bust of Washington by Houdon.

Washington collection accommodated within tall enclosure into which visitors enter.

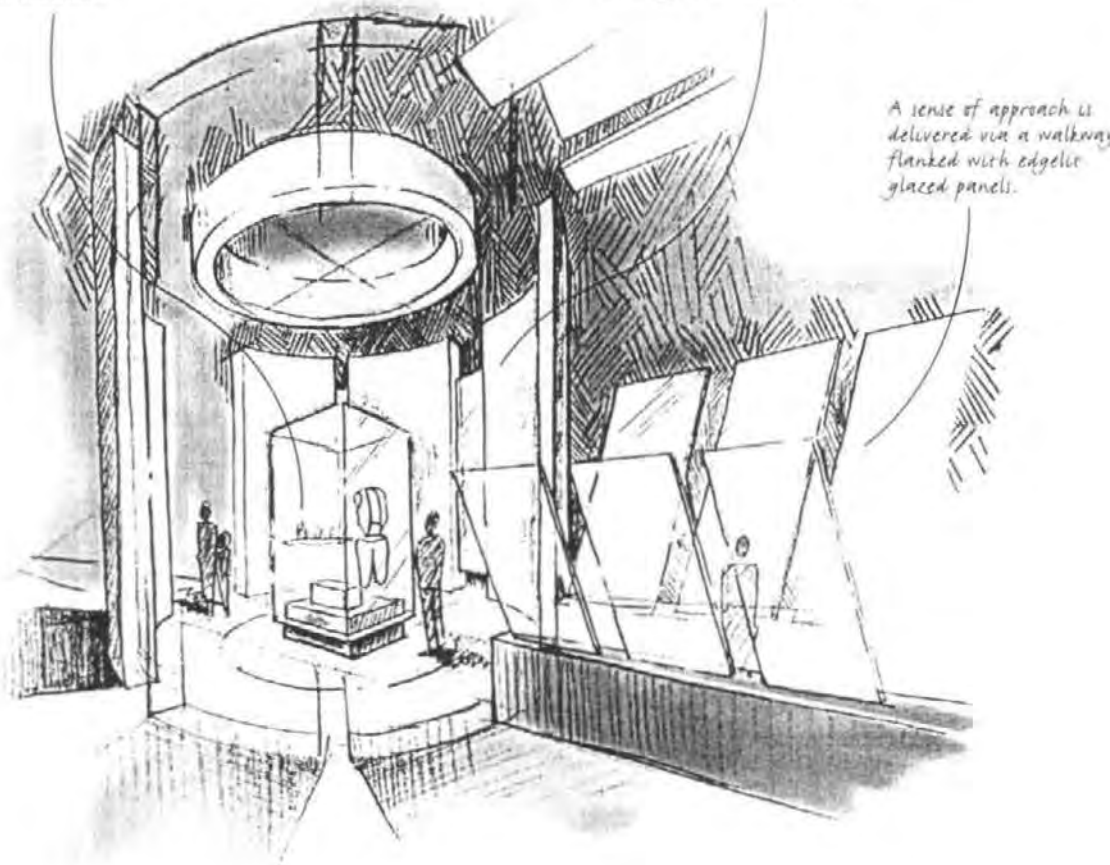
Glazed graphic panels edge lit.

Bust of Washington heralds start of approach to his personal items.

George Washington's personal possessions and clothes displayed and suspended within glass enclosure.

screening of the display highlights its importance, narrow vertical apertures offer glimpses in to arouse curiosity of external visitors.

A sense of approach is delivered via a walkway flanked with edgely glazed panels.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #22 - PART B

Location

Zone 3

Topic

George Washington: Man and Myth

Messages

- George Washington is a legendary figure and consequently it can be hard to discern what he was like as a man. It is possible to come closer to both the man and the legend through his personal possessions and objects associated with him.

Interpretive objectives

- Convey a sense of both Washington the man (the human scale of his possessions, the personal details they tell us about him) and the myth (the way Washington has been idealized, the fact that he is one of the great leaders of history).

Exhibit concept

(1) Objects: a display of Washington's breeches and waistcoat, silver camp cups, and medicine chest. These are highly significant, rare objects with personal connections to Washington. This exhibit area is intimate and like a treasury, to underline the sense of getting close to the real man.

(2) Objects: a display of objects connected to the people around George Washington, including a set of china, belonging to George Washington Craik, and An Help and Guide to Christian Families, a copy of a book written by Martha Washington and signed in her own hand.

(3) Object: a portrait of Washington by Joseph White (Drawn from life, 1790).

(4) Object: a bust of Washington by Houdon.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #23

Location

Zone 3

Topic

Valley Forge: the making and re-making of a national symbol

Messages

- Visitors will understand the nature of Valley Forge as a cherished national symbol.

Interpretive objectives

1. Present a variety of images, objects and memorabilia which demonstrate the way that Valley Forge has been "constructed" as a national symbol since 1778.

Exhibit concept

- (1) Images and objects related to the commemoration, memorialization, and popular perceptions of Valley Forge for well over 200 years.

SAMPLE EXHIBIT #24

Location

Zone 3

Topic

The symbolism of the Revolution and the development of an American identity

Messages

- The Revolutionary period saw a struggle for Americans to define themselves and their nation. In that process new symbols and icons emerged, many of which endure today.

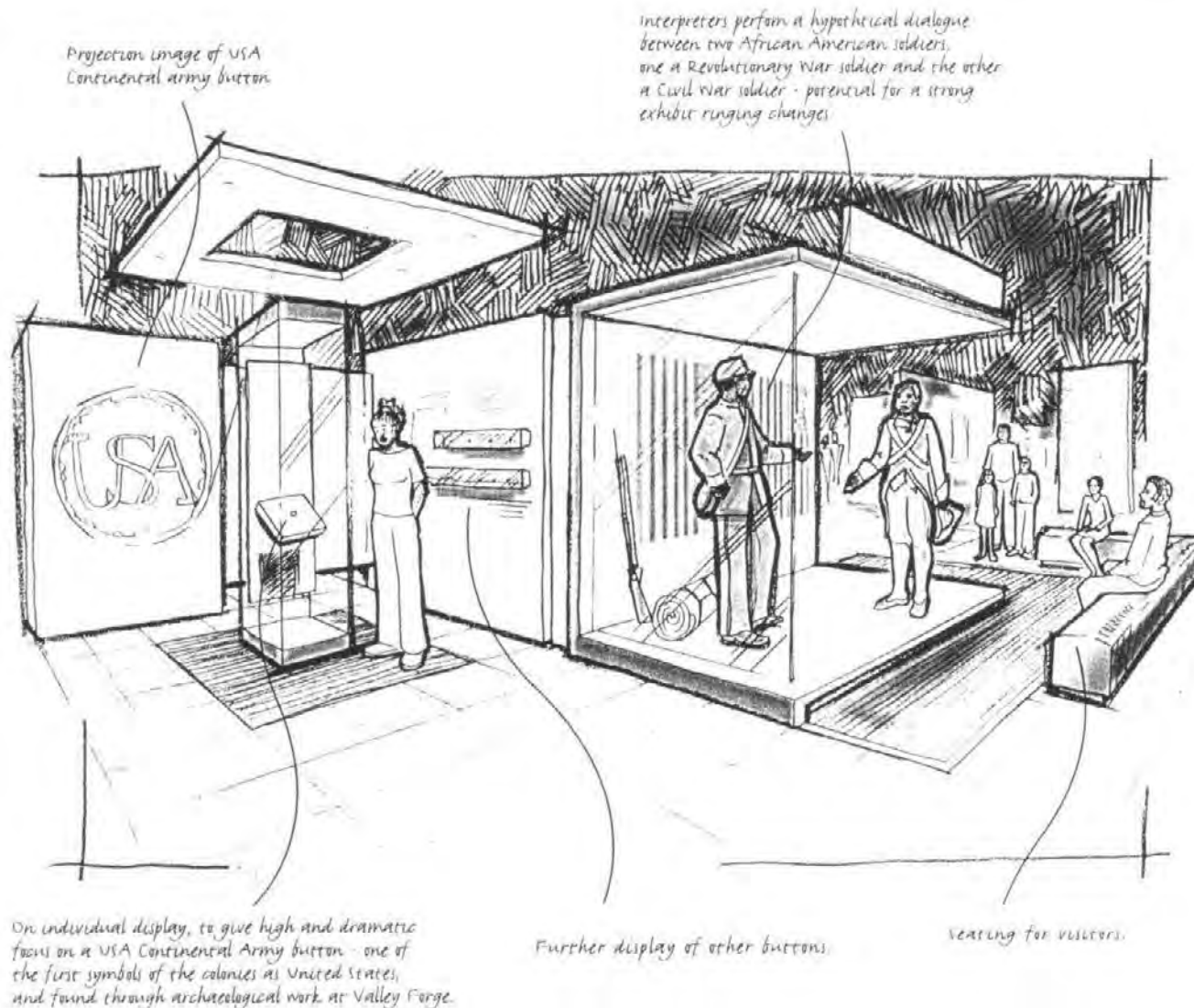
Interpretive objectives

- To show how abstract ideas, such as a sense of nationhood or patriotism and a personal identification with one's country, can be explored through tangible objects.

Exhibit concept

This exhibit explores the notion of the emergence of the idea of a united confederation of states into one political entity - a United States of America.

- It looks at the beginnings of this process, seen in the early years of the Revolution, through the display of objects. These include most notably a new design of button for the Continental Army, manufactured in 1777. This button, used on uniform coats, bore the letters "USA". Seemingly insignificant, until visitors discover that this is one of the earliest examples of any object in the United States actually bearing such a legend. Can they imagine an America without the letters USA today? Impossible. And here is where it began. The further unique resonance of this object is that it was found right here, at Valley Forge, through archaeological investigation.
- There is also an Interpretive Program Area to support this exhibit, which allows a variety of perspectives on the development of American identity to be explored. For example, what did the union of states mean to an African American soldier during the Civil War, a hundred years after the start of the Revolution? What did wearing a US Army button mean to him? Two interpreters can hold a dialogue across the centuries to discuss this subject.



SAMPLE EXHIBIT #25

Location

Conclusion Zone

Topic

The Revolution Ongoing

Messages

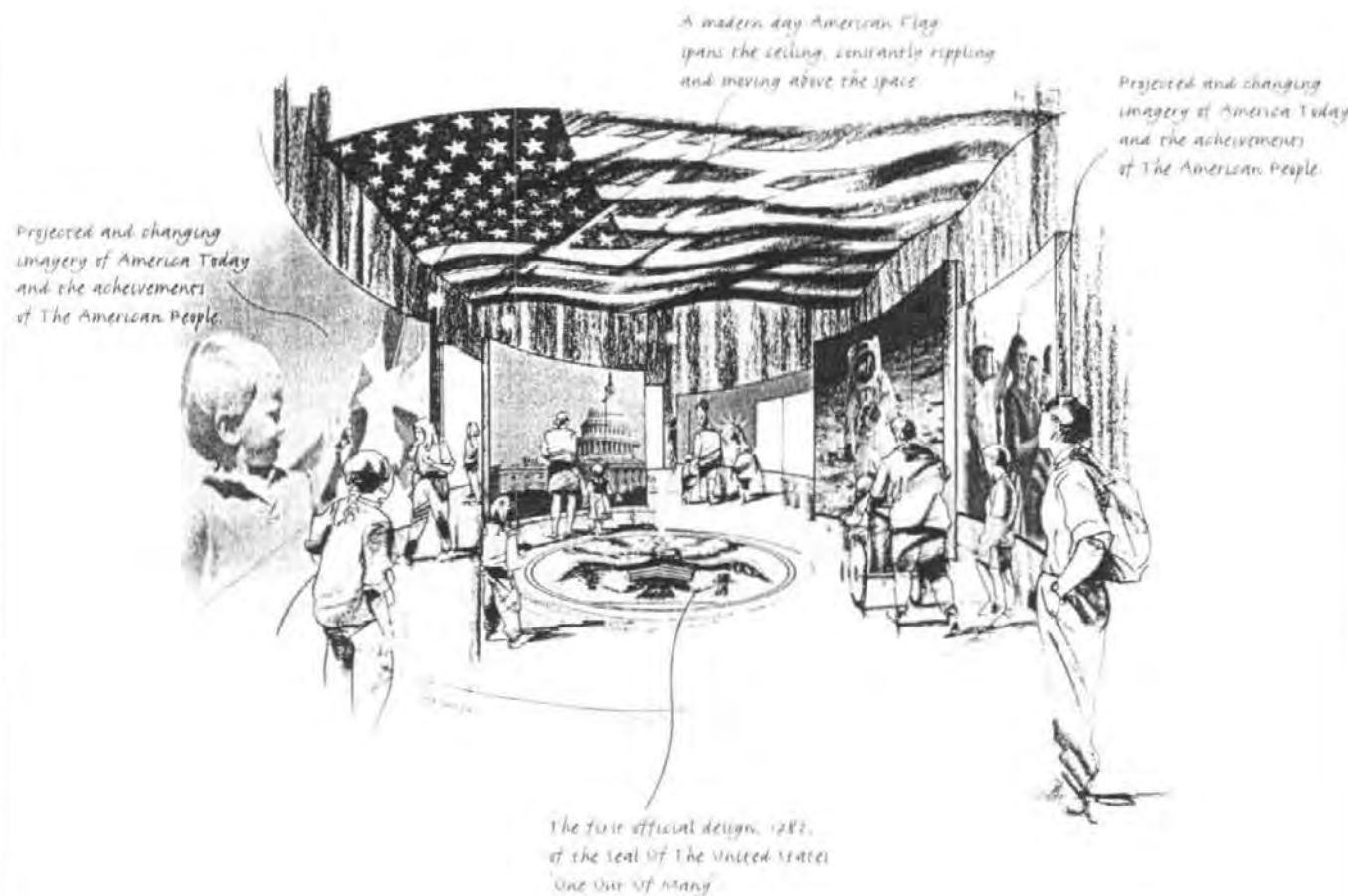
Visitors will be reminded of the main issues that the Revolution raises today, and be encouraged to think about what that means for them personally.

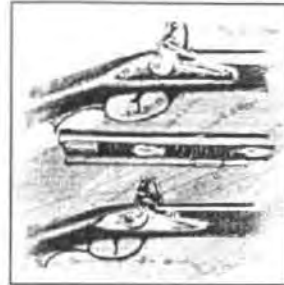
Interpretive objectives

1. Provides a defined "end" to the Center experience.
2. Reinforces the main messages of the Center about the American Revolution as a whole.
3. Provides a decompression space before the visitor experience continues in the Park.

Exhibit concept

(1) A positive tone is set here, which is also thought provoking and open-ended. This exhibit space helps to punctuate the experience, providing an uplifting but not triumphal sense. There is a focus on the sounds and images of people – to reinforce that the Revolution was a human drama. People visitors have encountered throughout their Center experience reappear here, and key quotes and phrases accompany them. Exhibits are designed to deliver punchy messages or impressions, and are not overly didactic, and the media reflects this – subtle lighting changes, soundscapes, large-scale dynamic and memorable images. Visitors are left with a sense that they are connected in some way to the story of the American Revolution.





Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The exhibit concepts presented in this document represent an overall vision and framework for the American Revolution Center, and its integration into a park-wide experience, at Valley Forge National Historical Park.

These concepts have placed at the heart of the experience the stunning collections, the fascinating personal stories connected to them, and the underpinning light and shade of the human drama of the Revolution. All these things, it is hoped, should form the basis for a transformational experience for the visitor, whose engagement or re-engagement with the significance and legacies of the American Revolution will touch their lives in meaningful ways now, and for the future.