In 1783, the Continental Army discharged its soldiers and disbanded. These young veterans typically left the army with little more than their worn-out uniforms and signed paper discharges. Scenes like the one shown in this painting, of a soldier returning home, were fleeting moments. According to Joseph Plumb Martin, a veteran whose memoir of his service was published in 1830 and is displayed nearby, “many of the poor men who had spent their youthful, and consequently their best, days in the hard service of their country” battled poverty after the war. It was not until 1818 (35 years after the war’s conclusion) that Congress passed the first Revolutionary War veterans’ pension legislation to benefit men who had been common soldiers. Some thought the support for the old soldiers was too little, too late. That year, a commentator in Boston’s Niles’s Weekly Register newspaper wrote, “A little while, and no one will remain to tell the story of the revolution.”

But perhaps the newspaper was too pessimistic. As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, more and more Americans and people in other countries are interested in the stories of the Revolution. And we have so many exciting ways to tell these stories, including right here at the Museum of the American Revolution. When we think about the American Revolution through the detailed paintings of Don Troiani, by examining original objects, and through innovative research and storytelling, it becomes more complicated, diverse, surprising, and fascinating than ever before.