Before the Museum of the American Revolution was built, archaeologists conducted a dig on the Museum’s site, looking to see what historical materials might be found in the ground where the Museum would be built. Among the approximately 82,000 artifacts pieces discovered were the pieces of this ceramic bowl, found in an 18th century privy pit. This pit, and likely the bowl as well, were owned by Mary and Benjamin Humphrey, who ran a tavern on one piece of the property the Museum now stands on.

Much like today, during the colonial era, people gathered in eating and drinking establishments like restaurants, cafes, and bars to eat, drink, share stories and information, and spend time with friends. This ceramic bowl would have been used to hold punch, a mixture of alcohol, sugar, spices, fruit juice, and perhaps other ingredients. It would have been passed from person to person, with each drinking directly from it.

Known as the “Triphena Bowl,” the bowl features an image of a ship flying British flags, above the words “Success to the Triphena.” Like similar bowls made in the 18th century, this bowl likely commemorated the launch of a new ship. In the 1760s, a ship named Triphena sailed between Liverpool, England (where the bowl was likely made), Philadelphia, PA, Charleston, SC, and the West Indies. In 1765, the year that Parliament passed the Stamp Act, the Triphena carried a message from Philadelphia merchants and traders to British merchants and manufacturers. It asked that they pressure Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act, which they feared would hurt their businesses. It seems fitting that a bowl celebrating a ship that carried a message of American colonial protest against Britain would be found underneath, and then be displayed within, the Museum of the American Revolution.