

Colonial Williamsburg

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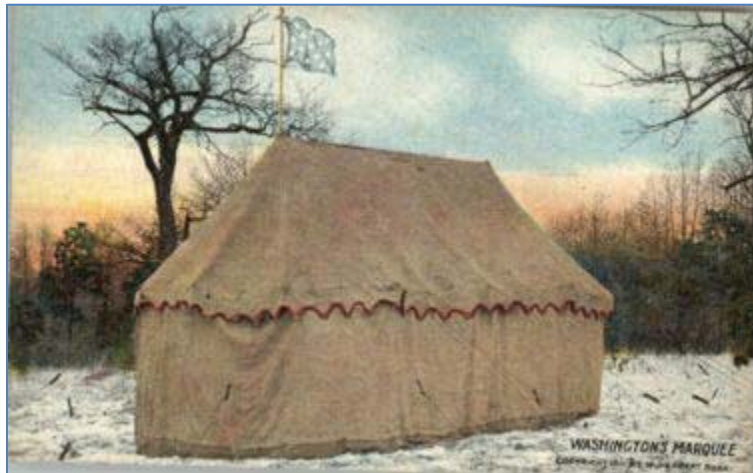
 **AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

www.amrevmuseum.org

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**Colonial Williamsburg and Museum of the American Revolution Collaborate
on Reproducing Gen. George Washington’s “Oval Office”**

*The tent will be hand-sewn by historic trades tailors using hand-loomed Irish Linen
this summer in a public exhibit in Colonial Williamsburg’s Revolutionary City.*



Washington’s marquee pictured on a postcard circa 1910

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. and WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (April 1, 2013) – It was George Washington’s home for much of the Revolutionary War, a large oval-shaped tent that was his bedroom and office – the first “oval office” occupied by the first commander-in-chief of American military forces. This national treasure will be displayed in the new Museum of the American Revolution when it opens in Philadelphia in 2016. This summer, it will be reproduced by Historic Trades tailors as part of a new partnership between Colonial Williamsburg and the Museum of the American Revolution. Once complete, the reproduction tent will be used by the Museum of the American Revolution for a variety of educational and museum outreach programs in advance of the opening of the Museum of the American Revolution.

Historical records suggest that the original sleeping and office tent was one of a pair of marquees made for General Washington in early 1778, at the end of the Valley Forge encampment. Washington returned to his Mount Vernon home with his tents and other military equipment in December 1783 after he resigned his commission. Following his death in 1799 and the death his wife, Martha, in 1802, Washington's military effects, including the tents were sold at private auction to Martha's grandson, George Washington Parke Custis. The tents were displayed periodically at the Custis home, Arlington House, during the ensuing decades until his death in 1857. While Union Army units occupied Arlington House during the Civil War, many of Washington's military possessions were taken into federal custody until they were returned to the Custis/Lee family in the early 20th century. Various elements of Washington's field headquarters are now held by institutions including the Museum of the American Revolution, the National Museum of American History, George Washington's Mount Vernon, and the National Park Service.

“Unlike most military commanders, George Washington stayed in the field with his army through the entire War of Independence, spending just a few days at Mount Vernon between 1775 and 1783,” said Dr. R. Scott Stephenson, director of collections and interpretation for the Museum of the American Revolution. “For much of that time, he lived under canvas. With the surviving elements of Washington's field headquarters scattered among various institutions, the reconstruction project is an exciting way-- perhaps the only way-- for visitors to experience the “other home” of George Washington.”

Fashioned from 160 yards of Irish linen — woven to three different widths — and 90 yards of linen from Colonial Williamsburg's Weave Room, all of the fabric for the reproduction tent is being hand-woven. The Irish linen is being produced by cottage weavers working for the firm Linenblue in Northern Ireland. Stephenson and Mark Hutter, Colonial Williamsburg's journeyman tailor, will take delivery of the linen in April during a presentation at the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, Northern Ireland. They also plan to visit the Irish Linen Center at Lisburn, and other historic sites that document 18th century linen production and have aided in recreating the fabric.

From mid-May through mid-August, Colonial Williamsburg guests will be able to follow their progress publicly in the Secretary's Office next to the Capitol in the Revolutionary City as tailors Mark Hutter and Neal Hurst along with six other seamsters as they assemble the linen canvas of the marquee and its chamber — the large outer tent and an enclosed smaller sleeping and office tent.

“It may seem surprising to have tailors make a tent, but it was actually part of the trade's work until the late Medieval Period,” said Hutter. “By the 18th century, no tailor in America was making tents. When the American Revolution began, Williamsburg's many tailors became deeply involved in supplying uniforms, flags, and tents. A couple of thousand tents were made by the capital city's tailors.”

Several of Colonial Williamsburg's trade shops also will be actively involved in reproducing the tent and its pieces. Carpenters and joiners will fashion wooden poles to support the structure. Blacksmiths will forge iron hardware and pole fittings. Wheelwrights will carve small wooden items and stakes to anchor the tent. The completed marquee will measure 22 feet long, 15 feet wide and ten feet high.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to use our expertise in the 18th-century trades,” said Jim Horn, Colonial Williamsburg vice president of research and historical interpretation. “Our guests will be able to see and experience the construction of the marquee, and we are able to partner with another museum to tell the story of the American Revolution.”

The reproduction of the tent, and associated research on General Washington’s field equipment, is funded in part from a generous grant to the Museum of the American Revolution from the Acorn Foundation Fund for History in Memory of Alexander Orr Vietor.

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The Museum of the American Revolution will be the nation’s premier museum dedicated to the complete story of the American Revolution. To be built in historic Philadelphia, just steps from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, the museum will feature a distinguished collection of objects, artifacts, artwork, and manuscripts from the period of the American Revolution that will bring to life the original “greatest generation” and engage people in the history and continuing relevance of the American Revolution. For more information, visit www.AmRevMuseum.org or call toll free, 877-740-1776.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, a center for history and citizenship, is a not-for-profit educational institution and cultural destination. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting the importance of an informed, active citizenry. Its mission, “that the future may learn from the past,” is realized through offering innovative, imaginative and interactive experiences – both on- and off-site – designed to educate guests about the importance of the American Revolution. From the RevQuest: Save the Revolution! series of technology-assisted alternate reality games, to the theatrical programming of Revolutionary City®, guests can become immersed in the drama of the American Revolution and discover the ongoing relevance of the past. Guests can also visit the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, enjoy the many gardens and green spaces, and visit up to 35 historic sites. To experience all that the Foundation offers, guests may stay in one of the five award-winning Colonial Williamsburg hotels and enjoy the renowned golf courses of the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club, indulge in The Spa of Colonial Williamsburg and shop in 40 stores. Fine dining is offered in more than 20 locations from historic dining taverns to restaurants with contemporary fare. Colonial Williamsburg is open 365 days a year. A full schedule of programs and special events can be found by visiting www.colonialwilliamsburg.com.

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