

# *Witness* TO REVOLUTION | The Unlikely Travels of Washington's Tent

## AUDIO TOUR »

### Object Highlight: Tent Poles 223

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This is one of our Object Highlights stops, and I'm excited to give you a chance to take a deeper dive by exploring one of the amazing things we have on display here.

Washington's tent was supported with heavy tent poles that broke into sections for easier transport. Iron collars reinforced the joints where sections met, and iron pins coming out of the tops of the upright poles locked into the tent's ridgepole and protruded through a thick reinforced hole called a grommet sewn into the tent roof, helping to hold the tent ridge in place. On the outside, a bulb-like wooden finials protected the iron pins and served as attachment points for some of the ropes that held the tent up. Even though each pole was heavy, the tent only needed three structural poles (each of which broke into two halves) and a few smaller ones at each door. The sleeping and office marquee uses many ropes to achieve a large footprint without making the equipment very heavy, making the tent much better for active campaigning.

The surviving tent poles are made from mahogany. This was a luxury wood, harvested by enslaved labor in Central and South America, and it was made into fine furniture in the British colonies and the new United States. Mahogany poles would have added an air of refinement to the interior of Washington's tent. But it was also a practical choice. As a tropical hardwood, mahogany was especially rot resistant. Because the tent poles often sat directly on the ground, this quality helped ensure their durability throughout the war.