

HISTORY EXPLORERS CLUB GUIDE

Liberty

DON TROIANI'S PAINTINGS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR



*I*f you were to close your eyes and picture the Revolutionary War, what would you see? Maybe you'd see lots of men in short pants, wearing powdered wigs. Perhaps you would think of British soldiers in red coats and Continental soldiers in blue, or women in bright silk gowns. Maybe you picture the cast of *Hamilton*. But is this what the war really looked like?

In this exhibit, you'll discover the work of artist Don Troiani, a trained painter who has spent his career researching American history. You will also see historical artifacts on display and learn about Don Troiani's research process for his paintings, including how he visits historic sites and studies historical documents and images.

Take this guide with you as you travel through the eight years of the Revolutionary War to discover some new places and new faces, and maybe even reimagine how you think America's fight for independence looked nearly 250 years ago.

THINK ABOUT IT

- How are these paintings similar to or different from others you've seen of the Revolutionary War?
- What can these paintings teach us about the Revolutionary War?
- How do the objects and paintings in this exhibit work together to tell the stories of the historical events they represent?

TALK ABOUT IT

Whenever you see this, have a conversation with your museum visit buddies! Tell them what you think and see if their answers are different or similar!

The Boston Massacre

Our journey into the Revolution starts in Boston, Massachusetts, on the night of March 5, 1770. A crowd of angry colonists surrounds a small guard of British soldiers outside the Customs House. Rocks are thrown, shots are fired, and five Boston residents are killed. It is an event that inflames already growing tensions between colonists and British troops.



Courtesy of The Dietrich American Foundation

Don Troiani used written first-person accounts and testimonies from people who had actually been at the incident, including soldiers and colonists, to create his painting. He wanted the viewer to feel like they were at the event as it happened, so he chose a perspective that places us in the turmoil, nearly at eye level with the event's participants.

Paul Revere created his engraving just three weeks after the encounter, to distribute in newspapers and as a broadside, or poster. He wanted to convince people across the colonies that the British occupation of Boston was violent and oppressive, so his image places us outside of the action where we can see his depiction of Bostonians as pleading, innocent victims, and the British as well-organized aggressors.

Look at both of these images and write in the space below what you see that they have in common. What are their differences?

SAME

DIFFERENT

TALK ABOUT IT

Which image do you think more closely represents what actually happened?

Victory or Death



Victory or Death, Advance on Trenton

Stand back and look at this painting entitled “Victory or Death, Advance on Trenton.” It is the early hours of December 26th, 1776 and George Washington and his army have just crossed the Delaware River. Now they must march for hours to attack the Hessian troops at Trenton by surprise. Look at the man on the very left, riding a horse. That is Alexander Hamilton, keeping a close watch on the cannons that his company is in charge of.

What other details do you notice? What sounds and smells might you have experienced?

Circle the words you think best describe this scene

Calm

Wild

Warm

Organized

Fun

Exciting

Cold

Adventurous

Exhausting

Noisy

Easy

Hard

Happy

Boring

Quiet

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose a person pictured in this scene and imagine that you are experiencing it through their eyes.

What might you be thinking or feeling?

Brunswick Dragoons

Don Troiani not only paints scenes from the Revolutionary War, he also collects objects from the era as well. He has hundreds of items, including muskets, swords, and clothing, that he uses to inform his paintings. Sometimes the objects appear directly in his paintings. He also hires models to pose for him so that his paintings feature a wide variety of faces and bodies, just like in our real world.

Troiani used three objects from his collection in the scene below. See if you can find them and draw a line from the real-life item to the version in this painting.



Gorget A decorative piece of armor worn around an officer's neck as a sign of rank.



Broadsword A sword with two edges and a cage attached to the end to protect the hand.



Cartridge Box Plate
A metal badge used to decorate the outside flap of an ammunition box.



Brunswick Broad Swords, The Brunswick Dragoons at the Battle of Bennington

DID YOU KNOW

Historians also use archeology to learn information about people from the past. The cartridge box plate displayed here was excavated, or uncovered while digging in the ground, near a farmhouse not far from the battles of Saratoga. **It is one of only two known examples of its type to survive from the Revolutionary War!**

Brave Men as Ever Fought



*I*n 2019, the Museum asked Don Troiani to create a painting based on the memory of prominent African American businessman and Revolutionary War veteran James Forten. On his 15th birthday, September 2, 1781, James remembered watching Washington’s army march through Philadelphia on their way to Yorktown, Virginia. As part of the parade, James remembered watching Black soldiers in the Rhode Island Regiment, who he thought were “as brave Men as ever fought.”

ANALYZE THE ARTWORK

Look closely at this painting. Think about the moment Troiani is capturing and use the space below to record your observations.

What are the people doing in this painting?

What do you think took place just before this moment in time? Just after?

What objects can you see being used? Do you see those objects in other places in the galleries?

Write down two words that you would use to describe the painting.

Why do you think James remembered these men as being “as brave men as ever fought”?

TALK ABOUT IT

Look around the exhibit for other paintings that feature civilians, especially women and children. Why do you think it’s important to represent their stories as well? What can we learn from those images?

Draw It!

Outfit your own Revolutionary War soldier inspired by the ones you saw in the galleries!

HEADGEAR

Will your soldier wear a tall **Grenadier cap**, a **Rhode Island Regiment cap**, or a **cocked hat**?



UNIFORM

Take a look around at all the different colors of uniforms that you have to choose from. Your soldier could wear a **green coat** like this British Dragoon, **brown and red** like the Philadelphia Associators, or even a **white hunting shirt** like a Continental soldier. What style and colors will your soldier wear? What does it tell us about them?

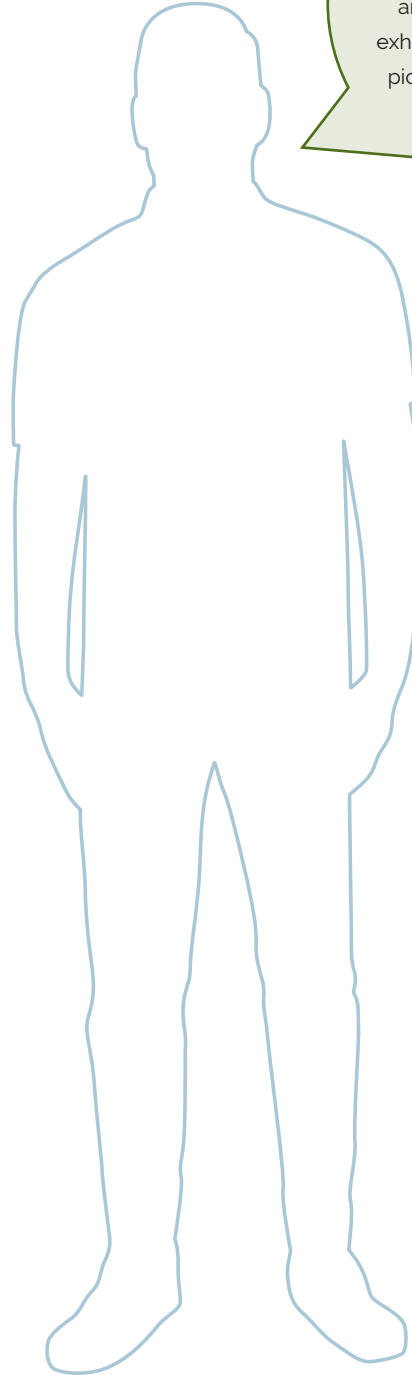


SUPPLIES

Will your soldier carry a **cartridge box**? Do they have a **canteen**? Take a look around the exhibit at the different supplies they might have carried and add them to your creation!

TALK ABOUT IT

How did the paintings and artifacts you saw in this exhibit change how you will picture the Revolutionary War in the future?



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ΙΣΝ / SNF

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