About the Museum

For far too long, the U.S. Army has lacked both a comprehensive story place and a fitting tribute to recognize and share the service and sacrifice of its Soldiers. It is now time to hear those stories, and to say thank you to fourteen generations of American Soldiers whose leadership, character, and selfless sacrifice have forged and safeguarded our nation for over two centuries. Their history is our history. Regardless of the mission—whether combat, peacekeeping, or nation-building—Soldiers’ stories exemplify the indomitable spirit that has so clearly defined the American character since 1775.

Fort Belvoir, Virginia, one of the country’s most prominent defense installations, has been officially designated as the future home of the National Museum of the United States Army, which is scheduled to open its doors to the public in 2017. The main building will be approximately 180,000 square feet. Outside this facility will be a park with a memorial garden and parade ground. Space is being planned to accommodate ceremonies, reenactments, lectures, educational programs, conferences and reunions. Once open, the Museum will welcome an estimated 750,000 visitors every year.

The Museum’s Soldiers’ Stories gallery will feature personal accounts from Soldiers serving from all generations, offering a glimpse into their personalities, emotions and values at their time of service. The Fighting for the Nation gallery will tell the Army’s remarkable stories of triumph and sacrifice from the first shots of the Revolutionary War and difficult years of the Civil War, to the overseas service of the last century and today’s ongoing Global War on Terrorism. The Museum’s Army and Society gallery, a gallery unlike any in the other services’ museums, will depict the interaction between the country’s oldest fighting force and its citizens, including the Army’s humanitarian efforts, the ever increasing diversity of the force and the efforts of the American people to show their Soldiers support.

The Army selected Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of New York as the design architect and Christopher Chadbourne & Associates of Boston as the exhibit design firm in September 2008. In 2012, Eisterhold Associates Inc. assumed the exhibit planning and Design and Production, Inc. began the exhibit fabrication.
Frequently Asked Questions

How will the National Museum of the United States Army be funded? The Department of the Army has donated land at Fort Belvoir, Virginia for the Museum Complex. The U.S. Army designated The Army Historical Foundation to lead the capital campaign to fund the construction of the Museum. The U.S. Army will operate and maintain the Museum when it opens and AHF will be responsible for all revenue-generating operations.

What is the Army Historical Foundation? The Army Historical Foundation was established in 1983 as a member-based, publicly supported 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the history and the heritage of the American Soldier. Under a September 2000 Memorandum of Agreement the Department of the Army designated The Army Historical Foundation as the official fundraising entity for the National Museum of the United States Army and is responsible for administering the Capital Campaign.

How much money is needed to build the Museum? The Army Historical Foundation is seeking $200 million in support for this historic Capital Campaign from leading corporations and foundations, businesses, states, national philanthropists, veterans groups, national fraternal organizations and the American public-at-large.

Where will the Museum be located? The Museum will be located on 41 acres on the grounds of Fort Belvoir, Virginia within the National Capital Region and just minutes away from Mount Vernon, the home of General George Washington, the Army’s first Commander-in-Chief. Washington, D.C. is the most visited metropolitan area in the country, and this world-class Museum will be accessible to as many Americans as possible.

Isn’t there already a national Army museum? Although there are over 40 certified regional Army museums located at U.S. Army bases as part of the Army Museum System, the Army is the only service without a national museum. Each of the regional Army Museums commemorates a different unit, branch, or historic period. The National Museum will present the history and heritage of U.S. Army in its entirety and, as the capstone of the Army Museum System, will serve and support all other Army museums.

Why is the Army spending all this time, effort and money on a Museum when we are at war and resources are stretched? The Army Historical Foundation is raising money for construction of the Museum from private donors. It is important we have a place that honors the sacrifice and service of our Soldiers, now more than ever, as we continue to fight the Global War on Terrorism. It is our responsibility to communicate the role the Army has in our history, which includes sharing personal stories of our brave men and women serving with an exemplary commitment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.
Brigadier General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr., USA-Ret.

Executive Director, The Army Historical Foundation

Brigadier General Creighton W. Abrams, Jr. USA-Ret., served 31 years in the U.S. Army. Commissioned in the field artillery, he commanded two batteries, a battalion, a division artillery, and a corps artillery—and served in Korea, Vietnam, Germany, Southwest Asia, and Italy. He taught gunnery at Fort Sill, OK, English at the United States Military Academy, corresponding studies at the Army War College, and a staff group in the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3), Fort Leavenworth, KS, where he was the Director for 3 years. He served on the Army staff at the Pentagon and on the NATO staff at Allied Forces, Southern Europe.

After retiring from the Army, he worked for General Dynamics Land Systems in Saudi Arabia. Currently, Abrams is the Executive Director of The Army Historical Foundation (since 2000). He has a B.A. in English from Princeton University, an M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina, and a Masters in Military Art & Science from the Command and General Staff College. He and his wife Joan have six children.

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Mr. Jordan E. Tannenbaum  
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Leadership Support

The National Museum of the United States Army has garnered widespread national support. To date, over 100,000 Americans have joined the US Congress, the governments of the Commonwealth of Virginia and Fairfax County, and various Veterans Service Organizations and Military Associations in endorsing this long-overdue tribute of our Army and its Soldiers. So, too, have the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of the Army, and Army Chief of Staff Army endorsed the Museum.

“A great Army deserves a great museum, and I want you to know that the National Army Museum has my full support. The Museum will be a most appropriate way to tell the Army story as it deserves to be told….”

General Martin E. Dempsey
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

“This Museum is going to be our Army’s national landmark—that one special, central place where currently serving Soldiers and Army veterans and their families can enjoy the enduring spirit of Army camaraderie.”

Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army

“Our Army is the strength of our Nation. Our Soldiers have shown unparalleled valor, dedication, and adaptability throughout our 236-year history. Today, as in the past, their selfless and heroic actions are a foundation of our Nation’s history. It is fitting that the Army has a Museum dedicated to its amazing story and to serve as a testament to our past, a chronicle of the present, and a guidepost for the future.”

General Raymond T. Odierno
Chief of Staff of the Army

A Great Army Deserves a Great Museum
The mission of the Collections Branch staff at the Museum Support Center (MSC) at Fort Belvoir is to collect, preserve, study and interpret the material culture and artistic record of the American Soldier. It will accomplish this mission by providing a museum-safe housing for, and laboratories to treat and examine, the Army’s National Collection of historic artifacts, art and related archives. In addition, the MSC will provide services to the Army and the entire Army Museum System (AMS) through hands-on museum professional training relating to the collection, treatment, examination, and exhibition of historic Army properties and art.

COLLECT ART/ARTIFACTS AND RELATED ARCHIVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MUSEUM DIVISION COLLECTIONS BRANCH SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS. The MSC will house artifacts of national significance in a museum-safe facility; store and conserve German captured war art and historic US Army flags in accordance with Federal law; assemble and maintain official publications and references relating to military material culture for use in identification, study and research. Studio space is provided for the Artist In Residence program; a proper environment is set aside for the creation of artworks based on contemporary operations, reflecting the experience of the US Army Soldier.

ACCOMMODATE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS PROCESSING AND MANAGEMENT. The MSC will account and care for collections in accordance with Army regulations and guidance and professional standards; establish technical accuracy of the collections data base; answer public and official enquiries and provide reproduction images.

PROVIDE LABS TO TREAT OBJECTS AND CREATE EXHIBITS. The MSC will support exhibitions of Army art and material culture at the NMUSA and throughout the AMS; obtain artworks and artifacts relating to current operations; conduct the SA/CSA portrait and Pentagon art programs; perform conservation treatment of art and artifacts in the collections and provide preservation assistance to the AMS.

QUICK FACTS...

The contract for the building of the MSC was awarded to Manhattan Construction in 2008.

Ground was broken in February 2009, and construction was completed in May 2010, on time and on cost.

The MSC has a total of approximately 127,490 SF; 63,360 SF for collections storage, 30,448 SF for collections processing and labs, 24,215 SF for mechanical, security and facilities, and 9,371 SF for admin and offices.

Total cost for the building was $24,380,000.

Movement of the Army’s central collections to the MSC began in August 2010, and was completed in January of 2011.

The move or over 33,000 artifacts and 15,000 artworks was thoroughly planned and professionally executed by the Collections Branch staff and ELY, Inc., a company of fine art movers.

All items were moved without loss or damage. The collections are now housed in their new storage cabinets or movable art screens.

For the first time, the Army’s collections are set out in a typological context, enabling scholars and staff to study more easily the development of the uniforms, weapons and equipment of the US Soldier.

Also, the valuable artistic record of the Army’s history is now entirely accessible for study and appreciation.

The MSC mission does not duplicate that of the Army Heritage and Education Center or the National Museum of the United States Army. It supplements them in their missions, provides a core collection for the entire AMS, and provides services for all Army museums.
Museum Fact Sheets

National Museum of the United States Army
The National Museum of the United States Army

The history of our United States Army is the history of our nation — its creation, preservation, resilience, and indomitable spirit have embodied American values since 1775. The Army Historical Foundation, in partnership with the United States Army, is spearheading a campaign to create the National Museum of the United States Army. We will soon celebrate our Army’s contributions to America and the selfless sacrifice of over 30 million men and women who have served in times of war and peace. This 185,000 square foot, state-of-the-art national landmark on 41 acres will be conveniently located at Fort Belvoir, VA, minutes from our nation’s capital. Annual visitation is anticipated to exceed 750,000 and includes students, Soldiers and their families, national and international leaders, and the general public. This Museum will immerse visitors in our Army’s history and heritage through dynamic exhibits and programs that highlight Army values. It will help visitors and future generations of Americans to better understand the Army’s critical importance — not only to our nation’s security, but also to our country’s social, cultural, scientific, technological, and economic growth. The United States Army indeed has a vital story to tell and now is the time to tell it.

The National Museum of the United States Army Objectives:

- Educate and engage current and future generations about the Army and its contributions
- Preserve the Army’s history and its prominent role in our nation’s past, present, and future
- Honor Army values, such as honor, respect, loyalty, and integrity, while providing an understanding of what it means to serve
- Pay tribute to fourteen generations of American Soldiers whose leadership, selfless service, and personal sacrifice have forged and safeguarded our nation
- Inspire Soldiers of today by connecting their experience to the legacy and leadership of a great nation
- Stimulate the youth of America to pursue scholastic excellence in any field of study that supports the Army’s core missions.

Army History is America’s History
Preserve ~ Honor ~ Educate

The National Museum of the United States Army Overview:

The Museum’s exhibits will engage visitors emotionally and intellectually through:

- First-person Soldier stories
- Interactive and state-of-the-art technologies
- Selection from 15,000 works of art and 750,000 artifacts, documents, and images
- Educational programs and classrooms
- Outdoor facilities
Soldiers’ Stories Gallery

The National Museum of the United States Army will provide a unique and engaging setting to tell the stories of Soldiers in their own words and voices.

These personal accounts of ordinary men and women from all historic periods and walks of life will offer Museum visitors an invaluable perspective on how much our country owes to Soldiers.

Their stories will be told principally in the Soldiers’ Stories Gallery, an inviting and inspirational entry gallery that introduces visitors to Army history in a way that transcends generations, connects the visitors to places and events, and mirrors them as a nation.

Before visitors reach the Museum’s main entrance and the Soldiers’ Story Gallery, they will begin to experience these accounts. Approximately 20-30 freestanding bronze-burnished pylons—each with a larger-than-life bas relief image of a Soldier’s face and accompanying biographical and other information—will be aligned in formation, stretching from near the parking area to the building’s entryway to provide an instant and dramatic connection between visitors and Soldiers.

Each pylon will introduce a Soldier from a different, randomly selected period in Army history who has a unique story to tell. Emotional resonance will play a key role in story selection; the stories will be moving, touching, humorous, exciting, and dramatic.

Once inside the lobby, twelve of these strong sculptural elements will be squared up into an organized marching formation, symbolizing the structure and uniformity of the U.S. Army while expressing the individuality of every Soldier.

Like the pylons lining the outdoor approach to the Museum’s entrance, the indoor pylons will include the Soldier’s biographical information, a description of his or her duties, and a personal narrative or quote that helps visitors understand the Soldier experience, Army culture, or Army values.

On one wall of the gallery “The Soldiers’ Creed,” beginning with the declaration, “I am an American Soldier,” will be carved into a large stone-like monolith, creating a monumental and reverential backdrop to the “marching” Soldiers. Other wall space will include embedded cases housing never-before-exhibited iconic artifacts that have specific Army provenance and have played prominent roles in Army and world history.

Our Soldiers’ selfless service and personal sacrifices have had a profound impact on our nation and the world’s history, and the Soldiers’ Stories Gallery will tell the stories of their accomplishments in unique and engaging ways. There is no doubt that this striking entry gallery experience will set the tone and communicate a central theme of the National Museum of the United States Army – the story of the Army is the story of Soldiers.
Fighting for the Nation Gallery

Consisting of a uniquely appointed central space and six sub-galleries, the Fighting for the Nation Gallery will allow visitors to experience a comprehensive, focused series of stories that get to the heart of the Army’s role as a fighting force at home and abroad.

A tabletop interactive projection surface (4’ x 10’’) is the focal point of the central space, providing visitors an opportunity to examine Army-related ephemera and objects dating back over two centuries. The six sub-galleries surround the central space, offering visitors immersive and revealing experiential moments that disclose deeper truths about combat, opportunities to understand the evolution of tactics and technology over time, and, throughout, in many forms, the first-hand accounts of the Soldiers who fought the nation’s battles.

The Founding the Nation sub-gallery covers the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Visitors will learn how Soldiers from all thirteen colonies were molded by Washington into a uniquely American Army, and later, how that Army repelled the British in 1812, gaining respect abroad and inspiring national pride and confidence at home.

In the Preserving the Nation sub-gallery, visitors will come to appreciate the full impact of the Civil War as the defining event of the 19th Century and learn how the conflict fundamentally changed the relationship between the Army and American society.

The Nation Overseas sub-gallery details the nation’s entry onto the world stage and the Army’s role in helping turn the tide during the Great War.

The three remaining sub-galleries—Saving Democracy: Global War; Saving Democracy: Cold War; and An Uncertain Battlefield—place the Army’s roles in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, regional hot spots such as Panama and Somalia, the Persian Gulf, and the current Global War on Terrorism in their evolutionary historical contexts.
Army and Society Gallery

Consisting of five sub-galleries, the Army and Society Gallery is destined to be a standout attraction that sets the National Museum of the United States Army apart from all other military museums. No other known military museum hosts a gallery that explores the broad and often unknown symbiotic relationship between the Army, its civilian government, and the populace.

The mesmerizing story of the Army’s relationship with society begins in Newburgh, New York, in 1783, with Washington’s emotional averting of a potential military coup d’etat that threatened to replace fragile civilian governance with military rule. This pivotal moment in Army and American history is captured in the Civilian Control of the Military sub-gallery’s Newburgh Theater, where visitors learn how Washington convinced his officers to abandon thoughts of taking control of the government, thus fulfilling the aspirations expressed in the Declaration of Independence and creating the world’s first democracy.

The Army’s efforts on and off the battlefields have often led to advancements in many fields, including medicine, aviation, communications, and digital computers. The Innovation and Invention sub-gallery features many of these advancements that have helped shape American society, culture, and economy. A reproduction of the “1908 Wright Flyer” and a restored Liberty Truck are among the artifacts showcased.

The Reflecting and Changing the Face of America sub-gallery tells the very personal story of the Army’s relationship to individual Soldiers and the larger ethnic, racial, and economic classes they represent. Visitors will learn how the Army has responded to and impacted issues such as immigration integration, gender equity, educational opportunities, and shaping the national character.

In the Army Supporting the Nation sub-gallery visitors will learn how the Army’s skills are frequently placed in the service of the country, to include humanitarian relief, the planning and construction of public works, and the maintenance of public order.

The Nation Supporting the Army sub-gallery will feature a major multi-media presentation that relates the story of the nation’s support of the Army through the years. Included are exhibits using two- and three-dimensional graphics, objects, photography, film, and interactive touch screens to demonstrate shared sacrifices on the home front. Rationing and recycling, industrial mobilization, the evolution of support organizations like the USO, and expansion of the wartime workforce will be addressed as examples of various ways the nation has supported the Army at pivotal times.
The Army Theater

Considered a “must see” venue expected to attract in excess of 80% of all Museum visitors, The Army Theater is a state-of-the-art theater-in-the round designed to portray the story of the United States Army and its Soldiers through a sweeping panorama of imagery and sound. It will engage, educate, and entertain using a variety of dramatic theatrical techniques that will allow visitors to suspend disbelief and heighten their emotional connections to past and present events.

The Army Theater will be prominently located immediately adjacent to the Soldiers’ Stories Gallery and can be visited at any point during a visitor’s stay. The awe-inspiring presentation will last approximately a quarter-hour, commencing every 20 minutes. Visitors awaiting performances can gain familiarity with Army structure and terminology at an interactive Army 101 kiosk.

With fixed and accessible seating for 125, the Army Theater will provide stunning sweeps of kaleidoscopic introductory images tracing the vast enterprise that is the U.S. Army. The 360-degree projection display will surround the audience with sights and sounds ranging over the transformational experience of basic training to combat in defense of our nation, from peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to the advent of technologies and services that have transformed Americans’ daily lives.

The versatility of the Army Theater’s design will also allow it to meet the multi-purpose needs during non-Museum hours, to include special events, presentations, ceremonies, and other meetings and lectures.
THE ARMY HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The purpose of the Army Historical Foundation is to establish, assist and promote programs and projects which preserve the history of the American Soldier and promote public understanding and appreciation of the contributions by all components of the U.S. Army and its members.

Have a question about this kit?

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