

# \$2.2M center opening at Morristown National Historical Park

William Westhoven, @WWesthoven

Published 1:24 p.m. ET Feb. 7, 2018 | Updated 3:29 p.m. ET Feb. 7, 2018



Morristown National Historical Park will unveil a new \$2.2 Discover History Center on President's Day Weekend at Washington's Headquarters in Morristown. We got a sneak peak. IPHONE VIDEO BY WILLIAM WESTHOVEN JAN. 30, 2018. William Westhoven



-   
CONNECT
-   
TWEET
-   
LINKEDIN
-   
COMMENT
-   
EMAIL
-   
MORE

MORRISTOWN - Rarely does a government agency act to charge less and offer more, but that will be the case starting on President's Day Weekend at Morristown National Historical Park.

Park supervisors are excited about the new \$2.2 million "Discover History Center" that will debut during the holiday weekend at the Washington's Headquarters Museum, part of the three-site Morristown park system.

They also are thrilled about a new policy in place at several national parks as of Jan. 1 that eliminates entry fees to the museum.

"This is wonderful," said Jude M. Pfister, chief of cultural resources and curator at the museum, which was opened in 1937. "The fact that we're able to open these hands-on, interactive, very engaging exhibits is very exciting. We're really excited about the opportunities for families, and people of all ages, but especially for school children."



New interactive exhibits in the Discovery History Center opening President's Day Weekend 2018 at the Washington's Headquarters Museum in Morristown, part of Morristown National Historical Park. (Photo: William Westhoven)

"The exciting new gallery brings history alive to visitors, and especially for 21st century children, with fun, entertaining and educational exhibits that invite the visitor to engage in the story through the interactive exhibits," said Washington Association of New Jersey President Eileen Cameron, which partnered with the museum over the last six years to raise \$1.8 million for the cause.

"This is about Morristown, and telling the story about Morristown, and what happened here, told in a way that is highly interactive," said park Superintendent Tom Ross as he activated a wall-size map of the northern New Jersey region that responded to his directions on a touch-screen monitor. "The idea is, for adults and for kids, is to touch. We want people to touch."

**OUTDOORS:** [14 places for maple sugaring](#) in Morris and nearby

Ross conducted a media preview of the center on Tuesday, demonstrating interactive exhibits that explained, through video, audio, games and other devices, a variety of subjects relevant to the Revolutionary War and multiple winter encampments of Gen. George Washington's Continental Army.

No battles were fought in the area, but the exhibits bring to life the harsh reality of life during those encampments, including equipment, dietary and equipment issues faced by the troops.

The center also offers visitors the chance to lift a real musket, walk through a re-created log hut and view videos of their choice on specific years and battles during the Revolution.

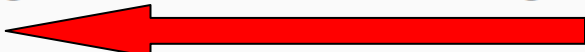


New interactive exhibits in the Discovery History Center opening President's Day Weekend 2018 at the Washington's Headquarters Museum in Morristown, part of Morristown National Historical Park. (Photo: William Westhoven)

Most of Discover History Center is located on the lower level of the museum, but more new exhibits have been added to the existing Military Museum on the main floor.

Museum operators already have soft-opened the center during the limited winter-season schedule.

"We've been watching people, seeing how the exhibits are interacting, how they are standing up and seeing if there are any issues with them," Pfister said. "We've been getting very, very good remarks."

The center will make its official debut on President's Day Weekend with a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 17. Weekend events also will include musician Linda Russell performing period music on a hammered dulcimer, re-enactors from the 2nd New Jersey Regiment and a new exhibit of images from the Ford Mansion by photo artist Xiomaro. 

**MORRIS TALENT:** [Seventh grader will show off acrobatic skills](#)

Across the park campus from the museum, the Ford Mansion, which housed Washington during his Morristown encampments, also will be open for self-guided tours.

Beyond holiday hours, which extend through Monday, the museum will stay open Tuesday to provide a seamless segue into regular Wednesday-through-Sunday hours the rest of the year.

Admission fees are typically waved during holiday weekends, but the new free-admission policy will continue.

"Our cost-benefit analysis revealed that the administrative burden of maintaining our fee program was not sustainable," said Ross, estimating visitor traffic at the museum to be 25,000 to 30,000 people annually. "This decision is the right thing to do for both visitors and staff members who can now focus their time and talents on the core missions of the National Park Service."

But Ross and Pfister also thanked the efforts of the WANJ for the fundraising efforts that made the center possible.

"This has been a project that we have been working on for a number of years with our partners at the Washington Association," Pfister said.

Founded in 1874, the WANJ is of the oldest historic preservation groups in the country. Over the past 13 years, WANJ and its Noble Cause Campaign has raised more than \$3 million for the Washington's Headquarters Museum galleries.

**MAYO PAC:** ["Baskerville", based on Sherlock Holmes classic](#)

Cameron said their campaign included a substantial gift from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, coupled with grants from the Dorothy B. Hersh Foundation, Hyde and Watson Foundation, F.M. Kirby Foundation, William E. Simon Foundation, A.P. Kirby Jr. Foundation and MCJ Amelior Foundation.

Additional corporate support came from PricewaterhouseCoopers, Peapack Gladstone Bank, Pfizer and Wyeth.

For more information about the museum or President's Day Weekend events, visit [www.nps.gov/morr](http://www.nps.gov/morr) or call 973-539-2016 x-210.