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## Photography exhibit provides unique perspective of Washington's troop encampment

BY CLAUDIA CEVA Staff Writer

**MORRISTOWN** – Four, large-scale photographs of the winter encampment of George Washington and his troops will soon adorn the visitor's center windows at Jockey Hollow National Park on Tempe Wick Road.

Fine art photographer Xiomaro (pronounced SEE-oh-MAH-roh) provides a unique perspective of the historic spots in a new exhibit set to debut on Sunday, June 6 and run through Saturday, July 31.



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The photographs, each 40-inches by 27-inches in size, depict the Wick House, where Washington stayed, and the dwellings of Washington's officers and troops in the snow.

The exhibit, which is sponsored by the Morristown National Historical Park and Morris Arts, also includes a video of the artist talking about his work on this and other projects and a virtual workshop on cell phone photography.

The 61-year-old Xiomaro, a New York City native, said the original idea was to show somewhere between 20-30 photos and provide the workshop in-person, but coronavirus restrictions forced a change of plans.

"What I did was I limited it to four key images," he said. "Rather than having people enter the visitor's center in a gallery type of situation, these photographs are mounted on the windows."

## ***Artistic Approach***

The New York City-based artist has now worked with more than 10 different national parks and historic sites, from New England to Florida, to produce photography exhibits.



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He said he tries to approach the projects from the perspective of someone who has never visited the places before.

"I try to think about what would interest somebody if they were here for the first time," he said.

"How can I present a series of pictures that kind of takes you through a journey, not just in seeing the place but also tells a story," Xiomaro continued.

He said he takes his photographs in a way where they can stand alone, as well.

For the Jockey Hollow exhibit, he felt the most intriguing aspect of the park was seeing the differences between the living quarters for Washington himself versus that of his officers and then compared to his troops' accommodations.

The Wick House, home to Henry Wick who owned Jockey Hollow, was offered to Washington to use for some of his troops. Xiomaro said its a simple building.

The officers were put up in log cabins, or huts as they were called at the time, which he said were "really rustic and really rudimentary" in nature.

"As bad as that was, it gets even worse for the rank and file soldier because they were even smaller, still, and there would be up to 12 of them living in this small, confined space," Xiomaro said.

He said he tried to convey the historical context of these four distinct living quarters in the exhibit.

This project was not the first he has done for the Morristown National Park.

In 2017, he was asked to take photographs of Washington's headquarters at the Ford mansion on Washington Place for a book to display outside for handicapped visitors as the building is not yet handicap accessible.

"If someone was not able to enter the house because of the accessibility issue, they can at least see what it looks like inside having these large photographs," Xiomaro said.

Then, last year, he was approached about taking photos of Jockey Hollow where just the troops were encamped which then expanded to including the Wick House and the rest of the encampment last December.

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## ***Exploration And The Art Of Seeing***

Xiomaro hopes this display inspires visitors to open their eyes to new possibilities with what they can do with photography, especially paired with the phone photography workshop.

“Everyone’s got a camera in their pocket with their cell phone, so people are experimenting more,” he said. “I think they have a greater appreciation of the process of taking a photograph.”

He said good photography is about the artistic process and seeing beyond the lens – this is the focal point of the virtual workshop.

“Because it is so available now and so accessible and simplified, a lot of people think that it’s all about the technology and the camera and it’s really not,” he said.

The third part of the exhibit is a video where Xiomaro discusses his different projects, shedding some light on smaller, lesser-known national parks and historic sites such as Big Cypress National Preserve near the Everglades in South Florida.

Another is the William Floyd estate on Long Island. Floyd is one of the signees of the Declaration of Independence.

“These parks are small,” he said. “They don’t offer you the grand vista that you might see at the Grand Canyon, but I think they have the same effect on a person from an intellectual point-of-view because you’re literally walking in history.”

## ***Weir Farm National Historic Site***

Xiomaro has published three photography books with his works over the years.

One of which is Weir Farm National Historic Site which paints a picture of the history of the Weir Farm in Ridgefield and Wilton, Conn., of which he has been the artist-in-residence for since 2012, through written word and numerous photographs of the property.

Weir Farm became the state’s first national park in 1990, thanks in part to former U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, Al Gore’s running mate during the 2000 presidential race. It was Lieberman who introduced the legislation to establish it as a national park, and he provided a foreword for Xiomaro’s book.

Xiomaro said the senator was “proud” to have had a hand in Weir Farm’s national park status and the two men formed a relationship during Lieberman’s last year in Washington, D.C.

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“We kept in touch, so when I was offered the publishing deal, it was much easier to get his attention to write the foreword for the book,” Xiomaro said.

## ***Visiting Jockey Hollow***

Xiomaro said the Jockey Hollow exhibit provides an opportunity for people to venture outside and do something COVID-19-friendly after being cooped up inside.

“After being locked up for a year and a half, I think it would be exhilarating to go out to a place like Jockey Hollow,” he said.

He said after taking a look at the exhibit, visitors can walk the trails and see the subjects of the photographs themselves, if they so wish.

“I think it’ll be good for people to kind of stretch out and enjoy themselves, but hopefully pick up some history while they’re at it,” Xiomaro said.

For more information on Xiomaro, visit <http://www.xiomaro.com/index.html>