



National World War I Museum

Mission Statement and Brief History

The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial inspires thought, dialogue, and learning to make the experiences of the World War I era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. We fulfill our mission by maintaining the Liberty Memorial as a beacon of freedom and a symbol of the courage, patriotism, sacrifice, and honor of all who served in World War I; interpreting the history of World War I to encourage public involvement and informed decision-making; providing exhibitions and educational programs that engage diverse audiences; and collecting and preserving historical materials with the highest professional standards.

Officially designated as the National World War I Museum by the 108th Congress, the facility is the only American museum solely dedicated to preserving the objects, history and personal experiences of a war whose impact still echoes in our world today.

Just two weeks after the November 11, 1918 Armistice, Kansas Citizens embarked on a campaign which would one day create the National World War I Museum. A community-based fundraising drive in 1919 raised more than \$2.5 million in less than two weeks to build the Liberty Memorial. Following the drive, a national architectural competition for a monument design was held by the American Institute of Architects. The site dedication in 1921 was attended by the military leaders of the five Allied nations – the only time in history these five were together at one place. After three years of construction, the Liberty Memorial opened on November 11, 1926, immediately becoming an iconic landmark.

To address major issues of deterioration that developed over the decades, Kansas City voters overwhelmingly passed a sales tax to raise money for the Memorial's restoration in 1998. Private fundraising supplemented this funding. The initial restoration was completed on Memorial Day, 2002.

In 2004, two other milestones occurred: (1) the passage of a \$20 million bond initiative to fund the construction of a new museum; and (2) President George W. Bush's signing into law a bill that designated the Liberty Memorial as the National World War I Museum. In 2006 the site also received the coveted National Historic Landmark status.

The National World War I Museum was designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, one of the preeminent museum exhibit designers in the world today. The culmination of a \$102 million project, the Museum opened to great national fanfare and critical acclaim on December 2, 2006.

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For publication: 816-784-1918

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