

Postcard from the Revolution

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Editor's Note: *By now, the long-awaited opening of the Museum of the American Revolution has been well publicized – the pomp and circumstance surrounding its public debut on the 242nd anniversary of the “Shot heard ’round the world,” with dignitaries cutting ribbons and making speeches, and historic re-enactors marching in full regalia. But we offer here another perspective, that of our longtime writer and contributing editor Bonnie Eisenfeld, whose unique evaluation gives us a compelling reason to explore this latest treasure in Philadelphia’s historical trove.*

Several impressions came to me as I visited the new Museum of the American Revolution twice in April – press preview and members’ preview. I noticed the contrast between learning history in school by memorizing significant names and dates in a textbook, and experiencing history visually and with a bit of chaos.

In my history textbooks, white men seemed to be the only participants. At the museum I learned that women, people of color, and Native Americans participated in the Revolution. In our classrooms, the Revolution was over by a certain date in the school semester. The museum’s introductory film tells us that the American Revolution lasted eight years and is still moving forward, its principles being embraced by segments of the American population and nations around the world.

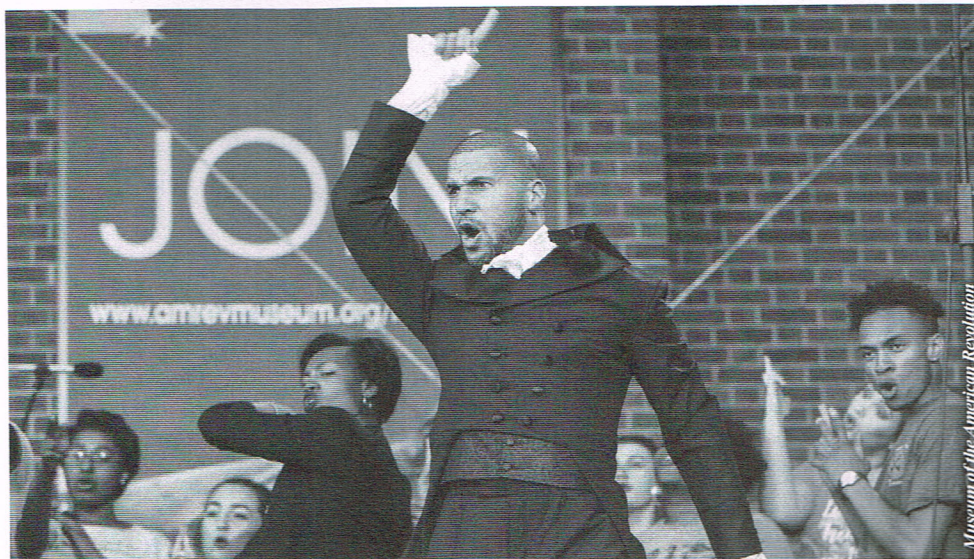


This dramatic diorama depicts captured Colonial soldiers forced to fight against their former comrades by their British captors.

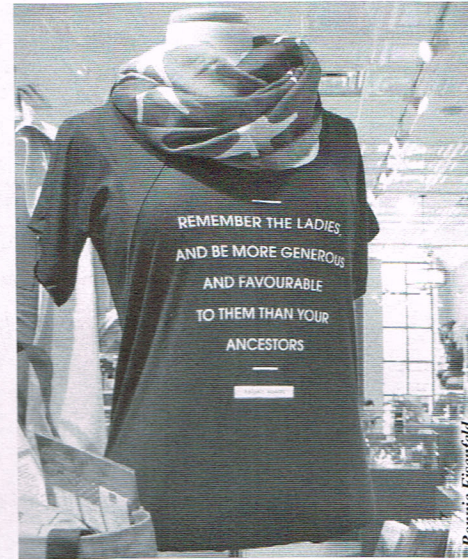
At the time of the Revolution colonists were not all of one mind that the American colonies should separate from England. Enslaved people and native nations were not in agreement among themselves about whether to support the British or the colonists. Did we learn that in school? Hard to say, with all the flag-waving and whatnot.

I realized that someday, our times will be history. People of the future may not

realize that we were not all in agreement about everything that happened. Will students even be required to read history in the future? Will they get all of its contradictions or will it be packaged into neat linear events? I hope they will get a nice museum dedicated to the survival of democracy, as beautiful as the Museum of the American Revolution.



Broadway star Sydney James Harcourt, of the original cast of Hamilton, backed up by students from the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, treats the crowd to a spirited selection of tunes from the hit show at the opening ceremonies.



Items in the gift shop with quotations from Abigail Adams.