



Mission Statement and Brief History

The National WWI Museum and Memorial is America's museum dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community.

The Museum and Memorial fulfills its mission by maintaining the Memorial as a beacon of freedom and a symbol of the courage, patriotism, sacrifice, and honor of all who served; 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 WWI Museum by the 108th Congress in 2004 and later a national memorial in 2014, 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 Nov. 11, 1918 Armistice, Kansas Citizens embarked on a campaign which would one day create the National WWI Museum and Memorial. A community-based fundraising drive in 1919 raised more than \$2.5 million in less than two weeks. Following the drive, a national architectural competition for a monument design was held by the American Institute of Architects with Harold Van Buren Magonigle from New York providing the winning design. The site dedication in 1921 was attended by the military leaders of the five primary Allied nations – the first time in history these five were together at one place – before a crowd of more than 100,000 spectators. After three years of construction, what was then known as the Liberty Memorial opened on Nov. 11, 1926 in a ceremony featuring U.S. President Calvin Coolidge and more than 150,000 attendees.

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 providing Congressional designation as America's official WWI museum.

Nationally acclaimed architecture firm Abend Singleton Associates designed the restoration as well as the new portions of the Museum underneath the original Memorial Courtyard. The new Museum exhibitions, which showcase objects and documents from the world's most comprehensive WWI collection, were developed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, one of the preeminent exhibit designers in the world.

Upon completion of the \$102 million project, the National WWI Museum and Memorial opened on Dec. 2, 2006 to national fanfare and critical acclaim. In 2006, the site was designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark and in 2014, President Barack Obama signed legislation recognizing the Memorial as America's official WWI memorial.

Since then, a new special exhibition space was added in 2018 and a multi-year initiative to create a richer and more immersive visitor experience began in 2022. The initiative, expected to be completed in spring 2025, will refresh and expand the galleries through new stories, technology and immersive experiences, as well as increase access to the Museum and Memorial's collection. These are the most expansive upgrades to the Museum and Memorial since its opening in 2006.

The Museum and Memorial has received numerous honors, including being ranked among the top 25 museums in the nation by TripAdvisor and Yelp, being honored among the best military-related museums in the nation by CNN and *USA Today* and the Museum and Memorial received the highest national award from the American Institute of Architects. Millions of guests from all 50 U.S. states and more than 100 nations around the world have visited the Museum and Memorial.