



# Hampton

CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU

**Media Release**

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**‘Give Me Liberty: Fugitive Slaves and the Long Revolution Against Slavery’ Continues at the Hampton History Museum Through April 8, 2018**

*--Originally scheduled to close February 25, exhibit has been extended--*

**Hampton, VA** – Due to public interest, “Give Me Liberty: Fugitive Slaves and the Long Revolution Against Slavery,” the groundbreaking exhibition exploring the lives of over 30 fugitive slaves from Hampton who made journeys to freedom or took up arms against their enslavers during periods of war, *has been extended through April 8, 2018*. This exhibit shines an inspirational light on their experiences in the context of slave resistance between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.

The exhibit especially focuses on the Black Loyalists (American Revolution) and Refugees (War of 1812) in Hampton who achieved liberty by joining forces with the British Army and Navy. Between these wartime events enslaved people in Hampton continuously resisted by taking flight. Through their revolutionary actions, fugitives not

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only freed themselves but fought against enslavement, ultimately helping to end slavery permanently. The exhibition concludes with Hampton’s Contrabands, who escaped to Union-held Fort Monroe during the Civil War, and the role they and other fugitives played in slavery’s abolition.

Accompanied by imagery culled from institutions throughout the nation, Europe and Canada, a wide-range of artifacts from the museum’s collection and other museums illustrate the struggle for liberty. Some of the items displayed include: the swivel gun from the *HMS Liberty*, a vessel that played a key role in the 1775 Battle of Hampton; a door lock, key set, ceramics, axe head, scissors and toothbrush from the residences of Black Refugees in Nova Scotia; a Revolutionary War-era naval pike of the kind used by black sailors fighting on both sides in the American Revolution; anti-slavery ceramics with images of an abolitionist nature; an 18<sup>th</sup> century Rutherford rifle used during the War of 1812 by the Virginia Militia for fighting the British, as well as for patrolling for fugitive slaves; and a U.S. Navy button and tools discovered during archaeology of the site of Hampton’s Grand Contraband Camp in 2014.

“Give Me Liberty” features several interactive elements. Visitors can try their hand at playing a snare drum after watching a video demonstration of musicians performing British and American field and camp music. Another station explores the role of the drum in African and African-American resistance and features a djembe, a goblet-shaped hand drum. The importance of knot tying is explored through hands-on challenges in the gallery since joining with the British could lead to a new life as a sailor. A cipher wheel offers visitors the opportunity to decode and create secret messages, as fugitive slaves often acted as spies on both sides.

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Through the stories of fugitive slaves, the exhibition explores three themes:

- 1) The complex relationship between slavery and liberty. In the American Revolution, War of 1812, and the Civil War, Americans fought for independence or to preserve the nation’s legacy of liberty. However, many Americans’ liberty depended on the enslavement of others. Enslaved people in Hampton fought for freedom by allying themselves with the enemies of their enslavers. In the American Revolution, slavery was at the core of the war between the Patriots and the British, and the actions of fugitive slaves were a primary catalyst for the 1775 Battle of Hampton.
- 2) Resistance as a revolutionary act. For enslaved people, revolution meant rejecting bondage and escaping the tyranny of their enslavers.
- 3) Waterways as routes to freedom. Fugitives used waterways to escape by traveling to nearby British ships, boarding Atlantic Ocean-going vessels as crew members, or taking passage aboard steamships on the Underground Railroad. Fugitive slaves fought against slavery on waterways by serving in the British and Union navies. Waterways connected enslaved people to networks of resistance throughout the Black Atlantic.

The Hampton History Museum is located at 120 Old Hampton Lane in Downtown Hampton. There is plenty of free parking in the garage across from the museum. Open Mon-Sat, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sun 1:00 p.m. -5:00 p.m. Closed major holidays. Admission is \$5.00 for adults, \$4.00 for seniors, active military, active NASA, AAA, children 4-12, free to children under 4.

For more information, dial 757/727-1102, visit [www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org](http://www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org), or like the Hampton History Museum on Facebook and follow it on Twitter and Instagram.

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton

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Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first arrival of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, harbor tours and cruises, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.

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