

# GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT ★ VERNON

## FORD ORIENTATION CENTER

### **What is the Ford Orientation Center?**

With state-of-the-art theaters showing an 18-minute action adventure movie illustrating pivotal moments from George Washington's life, *Mount Vernon In Miniature*, and bronze sculptures of the Washington family welcoming you through its doors, the Ford Orientation Center gives visitors an overview of the Mount Vernon experience while dispelling the elder statesman icon and introducing the *real* George Washington – a dynamic, fascinating hero – prior to touring the estate.

### **When did it open?**

The official grand opening took place on October 27, 2006, and included keynote speaker David McCullough, VIP guests, 18th-century-style musicians and military re-enactors, and more.

### **Why is it called the “Ford Orientation Center”?**

The Ford Orientation Center is made possible by Ford Motor Company Fund. Through support of this facility, the company continues its longstanding partnership with Mount Vernon, which began with the donation of Mount Vernon's first fire engine in 1923 (*see Ford and Mount Vernon Backgrounder for further information*).

### **What do visitors see upon entering the Center?**

The airy lobby of the Ford Orientation Center includes an elliptical floor-to-ceiling wall of glass that embraces a picturesque clearing with views to a pasture, a bucolic field that is actually the roof of the Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center (*see Building Design and Landscaping Backgrounder for further information*). The light-filled space gives visitors a continuous visual connection to the estate as they receive information before embarking on their tour. This design element was created by GWWO Inc./Architects to reflect Washington's own

plan for his grounds and his desire for visitors in the 18th century to have glimpses of the estate as they approached via a meandering path.

Visitors will gravitate to another wall of the lobby featuring a large colorful stained glass piece depicting five scenes – including the mythical “I cannot tell a lie” parable – associated with Washington’s remarkable life. Below the circa 1950s stained glass panels, created by the studio of Karl Mueller, is a timeline orienting visitors to Washington’s accomplishments.

### **What is the new George Washington movie about?**

A dramatic, action-filled 18-minute movie called “We Fight to Be Free” gives visitors their first look at George Washington as a charismatic American hero. Viewers will see Washington grappling with the challenges of the Revolutionary War and surviving close calls in the French and Indian War, meeting and falling in love with Martha Custis, and the legendary scene when Washington concludes that his exhausted and undermanned army must cross the icy Delaware River.

Filmed primarily at Mount Vernon by Hollywood production company Greystone Films, the large-format film will serve as an important vehicle for visitors as they transition from the present day to the 18th century. The mini-epic will be presented in rotation in two adjacent theaters with total seating for 450 viewers (*see Lights, Camera, Action Backgrounder for further information*).

### **What is “Mount Vernon In Miniature”?**

*Mount Vernon in Miniature* is an authentic, one-twelfth scaled exact replica of the Mansion which gives visitors unprecedented views of Washington’s home. Touring the United States since its debut in 1998, the mini-Mansion is a working model of the first president’s home and will prepare visitors for what they will experience in the real Mansion nearby.

The miniature’s doorknobs turn, windows open and close, drawers open, fireplaces and candles illuminate, and latches latch. Valued at more than \$500,000, the model was created over a period of five years by miniaturists, artisans and Washington enthusiasts. Two of its walls raise

and lower mechanically, and the roof opens up to reveal the beautifully furnished 22-room house, with its finely detailed woodwork and reproductions of Washington's furniture, china, paintings, and books. A single mouse whisker was used to hand paint some details.

### **Where are the bronze sculptures of the Washington family?**

Life-sized bronze sculptures of George and Martha Washington and Mrs. Washington's two grandchildren, Nelly and Washy, welcome visitors to the Ford Orientation Center. Created by StudioEIS in Brooklyn, New York, and supported by Robert H. and Clarice Smith, the sculptures are a three-dimensional representation of the Washington family and their life at Mount Vernon.

### **Who designed the exhibits in the Ford Orientation Center?**

Exhibits in the Ford Orientation Center were designed by MFM Design ([www.mfmdesign.com](http://www.mfmdesign.com)).

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### ***About Mount Vernon***

*Since 1860, over 80 million visitors have made George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens the most popular historic home in America. Through thought-provoking tours, entertaining events, and stimulating educational programs on the Estate and in classrooms across the nation, Mount Vernon strives to preserve George Washington's place in history as "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of His Countrymen." Mount Vernon is owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, America's oldest national preservation organization, founded in 1853. A picturesque drive to the southern end of the scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway, Mount Vernon is located just 16 miles from the nation's capital.*

### ***About Ford Motor Company Fund***

*Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, supports programs that enhance and enrich the communities where Ford Motor Company does business. Ford Motor Company Fund is committed to creating educational opportunities that stimulate creativity and promote cultural diversity, and Ford's support for the creation of the Ford Orientation Center is part of the company's longstanding commitment to education and the exploration of our nation's heritage. In 2005, Ford Motor Company Fund contributed more than \$50 million to educational initiatives and cultural programs, including nationally touring exhibitions and performing arts events. In the Washington, D.C. area, Ford has also recently supported a wide range of arts and education initiatives, including two national traveling exhibitions developed with the Smithsonian Institution, *Our Journeys/Our Stories* and *Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits* and *Enterprising Women: 250 Years of Women in Business*, presented at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. For more information on programs made possible by Ford Motor Company Fund, visit [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com).*