Fort Duquesne, at the beautiful river, secured the French claim to the Ohio River Valley. From 1754 until 1758, troops from the fort frustrated British efforts to colonize the territories west of the Allegheny Mountains. Both George Washington and General Braddock failed to expel the French from the Ohio wilderness. However, mounting British pressure forced French troops to abandon Fort Duquesne. On November 25, 1758, the army of General Forbes took possession of the smoking ruins. He named the area “Pittsburgh” in honor of the English statesman, William Pitt.

The Recovery of an Old Exhibit

The model of Fort Duquesne housed in the Historical Society was constructed by historians and architects as a public works project. Time had taken its toll on the structure when it was rediscovered in the basement, and the decision was made to restore the model for display purposes. The cleaning and refurbishing of the fort took time and patience. Once again the drawbridge, well, and even the doors of the buildings were functioning. Later, a casting resin was added to the moat, resembling the original at low water.

Details closely resemble modern conceptions of Fort Duquesne based upon historical evidence. However, the two bunkerlike structures housing the magazines are represented by log cabins in more recent reconstruction.

After the model was revitalized, furnishing it with an accurate eighteenth-century army was the next task.

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His interest in military history, especially that of the French and Indian War period, is of long standing. He is responsible for the painting of the soldiers and Indians in the restored model of Fort Duquesne on display in the Siebeneck Room of the Society's building. This was a labor of love for him. We are grateful to him for his interest in the affairs of the Society.—Editor
The Soldiers

The model of the fort is supplied with miniature soldiers (scale—one inch equals six feet). They are made of tin and alloys coated with primer and later colored with oil-base paints. The finished soldiers are accurate representations of the French Independent Companies of Marines. Until 1755, these troops were the only regular French infantry in North America.

Various scenes are depicted representing the fort shortly after Braddock's defeat in 1755. Outside the walls of the fort, a French officer watches his troops charge into action. He is flanked by a drummer, an Indian, and a flag bearer. We also find the Canadian militia in their civilian clothes taking part in the drill.

No drawings or remains of standards carried by the Independent Companies exist, but the blue flag with the three yellow fleurs-de-lis is copied from a flag on display in the Historical Society. It is not represented as being a flag which would have been flown in the fort, since the gold fleur-de-lis on blue generally was flown only in the royal court.

A French ensign can be seen brandishing a sword while a sergeant carries the halberd. The officer's spontoon and the sergeant's halberd were pole arms utilized by European nations to give direction, rather than for battle. On the frontier these pole arms were often abandoned in favor of the musket, pistol, short sword, or tomahawk. By the drawbridge, soldiers have streamed out of the fort. An amazed trooper, dressed for frontier battle, watches an officer and a sergeant lead the troops to a bunker.

Moving around the fort more action unfolds. Soldiers, wearing blue tassel caps trimmed with gold, throw practice grenades at an improvised target. On one of the bastions soldiers are manning the walls, while an Indian exhorts three kneeling troops to spread out, and a militiaman urges a sergeant to climb quickly a nearby ladder. At the center of the fort, the commandant questions a British officer of the Forty-Fourth Regiment, while another prisoner from the Forty-Eighth Regiment is escorted by a member of the militia. A blanket-carrying frontiersman watches the scene.

At the rear of the fort, sentries walk their post while gazing at the Ohio River. Near the commandant's headquarters the white and gold flag of France flies over the fort. These scenes depict one moment in the military history of Fort Duquesne.
The Military Uniforms

The exact coloring for the soldiers' uniforms was obtained from the Company of Military Historians. Here is the coloring information.

Soldiers: they wore a greatcoat of light grey, with dark blue lining, facing, and vest. Collars were omitted from the uniforms of French colonial infantry. The arrangement of brass buttons was as follows — coat front, eight; dark blue facing on the sleeves, three; coat pockets, three; vest, eight. The shirt was white, and the trousers were dark blue. Long white gaiters with pewter buttons were fastened above the knee with a black garter. Sometimes the gaiters were brown in color. Shoes were black with brass buckles, and the tricornered hat was black with a gilt trim and a black cockade with a brass button. At times a dark blue tassel cap with a gold fleur-de-lis in the center and with gold trim was substituted for the tricornered hat.

Equipment: a Charleville musket with brown stock and gun metal parts and a reddish brown pouch with a white leather anchor and trim were general issue. In addition, there were brown cross belts and a sword belt, brown or black, with a brass hilt.

Corporals: they wore uniforms the same as the soldiers, with a thin yellow cloth band surrounding the blue facing on the sleeve.

Sergeants: again, their uniform was the same as that of the soldiers but of better quality and with a gilt band around the sleeve. The French halberd was a two-headed axe with a spearhead carried as a pole arm by sergeants.

Officers: their uniforms were white instead of light grey, with details identical to those of the soldiers, but the buttons were gilt instead of brass. The vest, in addition, had gilt trim, and a moon-shaped silver gorget with gold insignia was attached. Boots of various styles were used. The tricornered hat had gilt trim. The spear-shaped pole arm, called a spontoon, was carried by officers.

Commandant: he wore a dark blue coat with gilt trim around the sleeves, shoulders, vest, and buttons which were gilt. The uniform resembled those worn at the royal court in France.

Canadian militia (coureurs de bois): they dressed normally in frontier garments with Indian trade items such as tomahawks, knives, buckskins, and belts. The rest of their equipment was similar to that carried by the soldiers.

Indians: they dressed habitually in buckskin clothes with belts of leather or beaded work.

Drummers: they dressed in dark blue coats with red facing
and vest and dark blue pants. Their brass-button pattern followed that of the soldiers, and the entire uniform was trimmed in white and crimson. Their gaiters were the same as the soldiers.

The *cannon* are accurate models of eighteenth-century artillery. They are blackened to appear as though they had been fired.