Exhibits

The Vietnam War: 1945-1975
April 13 through September 22, 2019

This groundbreaking exhibition developed by the New-York Historical Society examines the causes, progression, and consequences of one of the most controversial events of the 20th century. The exhibition examines how the divisive war challenged democracy and the foundations of American life. A compelling range of artifacts and interactive digital media help to convey the story, including the contributions made by Western Pennsylvanians to the war and the conflicts it raised here in the region.

Fall 2018 — Ongoing Exhibits

Destination Moon: The Apollo 11 Mission
Through February 18, 2019

Through original Apollo 11-flown objects, models, videos, and interactives, visitors will learn about the historic journey of the Apollo 11 crew — Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin. Destination Moon demonstrates how Pittsburgh companies and innovators used their “Can Do” spirit to play an important role in the Apollo 11 mission.

Heroes and Sheroes: The Art and Influence of Ruth E. Carter in Black Cinema
Through December 2, 2018

Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation

Visible Storage
A behind-the-scenes look at the museum’s collection.

From Slavery to Freedom
Explore 250 years of African American history in Pennsylvania

Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum
Heinz

Special Collections Gallery
Treasures that celebrate our ethnicity, industry, innovation, and lifestyle.

Glass: Shattering Notions

Rediscovering Lewis & Clark: A Journey with the Rooney Family

Prine Collection of Woodworking Planes

Wrought Metal Treasures from the Blum Collection

Clash of Empires: The British, French & Indian War, 1754-1763

At Fort Pitt Museum:
From Maps to Mermaids: Carved Powder Horns in Early America
Through December 31, 2018

At Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village:
Closing for the season on November 1
The Wright Stuff

In 1903, aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright made four powered flights at Kitty Hawk, N.C., successfully inventing the world’s first successful flying machine. To avoid weighing down the airplane, the Wright Brothers’ historic Flyer featured an aluminum engine block and crankcase supplied by The Pittsburgh Reduction Company, later known as Alcoa.

Just six decades after man’s first powered flight, astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped out of the Apollo 11 Lunar Module and onto the rocky surface of the Moon on July 20, 1969 to make “one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind.”

When the Apollo 11 crew returned to Earth, it fulfilled President John F. Kennedy’s 1961 promise of “landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth.”

Fittingly, Neil Armstrong took a piece of fabric and wood from the Wright Flyer to the surface of the Moon to show how far Americans had come (both literally and figuratively) in a short period.

And like the Wright Brothers’ first flight, Pittsburgh once again stood at the forefront of another epic moment in our nation’s history.

Among our region’s many contributions to the Apollo 11 mission, the Westinghouse Electric Company created the special cameras used to film the iconic video footage of the Moon landing, which was seen by a worldwide television audience of millions. The Union Switch & Signal Company supplied key relays for the Apollo Lunar Module and Alcoa aluminum is used in the lander’s hatch.

It’s estimated that more than 400,000 Americans helped make the Apollo 11 mission a success, including thousands of Western Pennsylvanians.

Among those is Pittsburgh native Jack Kinzler, who invented the Lunar Flag Assembly (LFA) that made the famous U.S. flag “fly” on the windless Moon.

You can read more about these important innovations in this issue of Western Pennsylvania History magazine, but you can see and experience these stories in the History Center’s epic Smithsonian exhibition, Destination Moon: The Apollo 11 Mission.

It’s a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see an American treasure in Pittsburgh—the Command Module Columbia. This national tour marks the first time in nearly 50 years that the Columbia (built by Pittsburgh-based Northern American Rockwell) has left the Smithsonian and likely the last time it will travel again in this lifetime.

We hope to see you at this stellar exhibition!