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DAR Museum Exhibits Post-Revolutionary War Fashion

WASHINGTON, D.C. - If you're starting a new country, how far do you go? Do you break from your parent country in all things, cultural as well as political, or do you maintain some ties? Those were the questions facing Americans in the new United States. The new DAR Museum exhibit, "An Agreeable Tyrant: Fashion After the American Revolution," on display October 7, 2016 through April 29, 2017, considers how Americans fashioned a new identity through clothing. On the one hand, Americans sought to be free from Europe, yet they still relied heavily on European manufacturing and materials.

The exhibit presents women's and men's clothing from 1780 through 1825 on more than 50 mannequins throughout a dozen of the DAR Museum's period rooms. Visitors will see the fashion of the time set within its historically appropriate setting. "This exhibit will appeal to not only those interested in fashion, but also to those exploring the larger question of how our material culture reflects who we are," says Museum Director and Chief Curator Heidi Campbell-Shoaf.

"An Agreeable Tyrant: Fashion After the American Revolution" takes its title from a satirical essay that first appeared in American newspapers in the 1760s, as colonists began to resent their dependence on Britain. "What is Fashion?" asked the satirically titled "English Catechism." "An agreeable tyrant," was the answer. This was widely reprinted in 1783, as the newly formed nation attempted to break socially and economically free from Europe.

Find out how Americans navigated the tricky waters of identity and fashion as you admire elegant gowns, handsome hats, and humble aprons. These surviving garments from the earliest days of this country will transport you back in time as you wrestle with the same questions they did. "It was a real challenge at the time," says Curator of Costume and Textiles Alden O'Brien. "Americans wanted to be seen as a separate, unique country while still commanding the respect of the European nations they were trading with. What was a patriotic American to wear?"

DAR Museum admission is always free. It is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (closed on Federal holidays). Guided exhibit tours for walk-in individuals are offered Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. for the duration of the exhibit. Groups of 10 or more may request a tour at museum@dar.org for a \$5 per person fee.

About the DAR Museum

The DAR Museum tells the story of the American home from the 1600s through the early 1900s through objects, exhibits, and programming. The DAR Museum, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, supports the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution's goals of historic preservation and education through collecting, preserving, and interpreting American decorative arts and material culture. Learn more at www.dar.org/museum