Delaware's State Museums Reopening With Self-Guided Tours

(DOVER, Del.—June 1, 2020)—Delaware's five state museums will begin reopening this week with self-guided tours that allow visitors to experience the history of the First State while continuing to take all recommended steps to safeguard public health.

Interior of The Old State House in Dover. The State of Delaware's five museums will begin reopening on June 5, 2020.

In accordance with the Phase I reopening plans issued by Gov. John Carney, museums administered by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (HCA) will accept reservations for tours starting June 1, with the first set of tours scheduled for Friday through Sunday, June 5-7.

With museums across the state closed to the public in response to the coronavirus pandemic, HCA's team of site managers and historical interpreters have spent the last several weeks retooling tour programming in anticipation of reopening. The new self-guided tours include all the engaging content visitors expect at one of Delaware's nationally accredited state museums, presented in a way that allows for effective social distancing.

"We are very excited and proud to welcome the public back to Delaware's historical sites in a safe and deliberate manner," said Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs Director Tim Slavin. "Our team has worked hard to design an experience for visitors that connects them to the people, places and artifacts of our shared past, while respecting the demands of the present."

Delaware's state museums include the John Dickinson Plantation, the Old State House and the Johnson Victrola Museum in Dover, the Zwaanendael Museum in Lewes, and the New Castle Court House Museum.

Tours will take place at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on Sundays (except for the Johnson Victrola Museum.) To make a tour reservation, patrons must call the museum they wish to visit. Contact information is available here.

Self-guided tours will be 30 minutes in length and will include reference materials that can be accessed via smartphone or in single-use printed form. Due to space constraints, some museum areas will remain closed for the time being. Tour groups will be limited to four or six visitors, depending on the museum, and cloth face coverings must be worn at all times by staff, volunteers and patrons. All public museum areas will be cleaned between tour groups according to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Administered by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the five museums of the State of Delaware tell the story of the First State's contributions to the history and culture of the United States. Through tours, exhibits, school programs and hands-on activities, the museums shine a spotlight on Delaware's unique history and the diverse people who came to live there. The museums are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The New Castle Court House Museum and the John Dickinson Plantation are partner sites of the First State National Historical Park. The Old State House is located on the Dover Green, another partner site of the park.

Section from the exhibit "A Seaborne Citizenry: The DeBraak and Its Atlantic World" at the Zwaanendael Museum

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is an agency of the State of Delaware. The division enhances Delaware's quality of life by preserving the state's unique historical heritage, fostering community stability and economic vitality and providing educational programs and assistance to the general public on Delaware history. The division's diverse array of services includes operation of five museums which are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, administration of the State Historic Preservation Office, conservation of the state's archaeological and historic-objects collections, operation of a conference center and management of historic properties across the state. Primary funding for division programs and services is provided by annual appropriations from the Delaware General Assembly and grants from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, a federal agency. However, the contents and opinions expressed in the division's programs and services do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior.

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