

'Star Wars' to be displayed at Smithsonian

The National Air and Space Museum will feature movie paraphernalia to peak children's interests.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The X-wing fighter piloted by Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars" isn't as historically significant as the Apollo 11 space capsule in the Smithsonian's most popular museum. Curators say it has earned its space by sparking Americans' imaginations.

The National Air and Space Museum announced Tuesday it will open an exhibit next fall to mark the 20th anniversary of "Star Wars," showcasing 250 original movie props, artwork, models and costumes.

"The best way to get kids interested

in space is to give them a good fantasy," said curator Mary Henderson, who is also writing a book about "Star Wars" as a popular American myth. "One major motive ... is to show 'Star Wars' as a compelling space-flight fantasy."

Among the displays will be models of Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, imperial star destroyers and Luke's X-wing fighter. Also look for life-size models of Chewbacca and C-3PO, Princess Leia's white robe dress from the original movie and her scant slave-girl costume from "Return of the Jedi."

Also included will be artwork used as scenery on the ice planet of Hoth, early drawings of characters and scenes such as the bar on Luke's home planet, Obi-Wan Kenobi's light saber and a 30-minute documentary about the myth that captured America's imagination.

"Star Wars" is famous for the

beauty and the rich detail of the models that were made for it," Henderson said. "One of the things 'Star Wars' did was create a whole new way of doing special effects. It looks a little primitive now, but back then it was something really special."

This is not the museum's first foray into Hollywood's version of space. The Air and Space Museum displayed props and costumes from "Star Trek" in a 1992 exhibit, which attracted nearly 900,000 visitors. Many lined up before the museum opened each day for 11 months.

Curators had an idea how popular their planned "Star Wars" exhibit would be when they started setting up the preview display case this week. Though workers were hidden by a six-foot partition, visitors stretched cameras over their heads to take pictures of the life-size model of C-3PO, the golden robot who accompanied Luke Skywalker around the galaxy.

"You can tell how popular it's going to be just by looking at the kids' faces when they see R2-D2," said Kim Riddle, spokeswoman for the museum. "They love it."

The showcase offers a sneak preview with life-size models of C-3PO, R2-D2 and an imperial storm trooper, and several paintings used in the filming.

Props and costumes from the trilogy have been stored in the California archives of Lucasfilm Ltd., and only a few items have been displayed in San Francisco and Japan.

"The Smithsonian asked us if they could create an exhibit about the impact the 'Star Wars' trilogy has had on popular culture," said Gordon Radley, president of Lucasfilm. "We were very pleased to be recognized in this way."

The museum show, to open in November 1997, should add to what is expected to be a blaze of publicity for

next year's anniversary of the original. In addition to the original three movies returning to the big screen this spring, expect Hollywood merchandising to include everything from action figures to lunch boxes.

The re-released "Star Wars" trilogy will include previously discarded footage and buffed-up special effects and soundtracks. "Star Wars" hits theaters Jan. 31, followed by "The Empire Strikes Back" Feb. 21, and "Jedi" March 7. Then in 1998, the first of the 'prequels' are expected to tell the story of how Darth Vader turned to the dark side.

"Star Wars" is the fourth-highest grossing film ever, with \$323 million in receipts, behind "E.T.," "Jurassic Park," and "Forrest Gump." "Empire" and "Jedi" took in \$264 million and \$223 million respectively, still putting them in the top 15.

Widows gain from generosity of former slave

Ohio town still distributes man's century-old bequest

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio (AP) — For years, Yellow Springs has been keeping a list and checking it twice. But it's the widows, not the kids, who get the Christmas gift.

Every year during this season, every widow in town gets a free 10 pounds of flour and 10 pounds of sugar, part of a century-old bequest from a former slave.

"The first time I got it I didn't know whether to laugh or cry," said Pat Hubbard, whose husband died nine years ago. "So I did both."

The widows' benefactor, Wheeling Gaunt, bought his freedom from a Kentucky slaveholder for \$900, moved to Yellow Springs — a stop on the Underground Railroad — in the 1860s, and made his fortune as a teamster, car-

penter and farmer.

At the time of his death in 1894, he donated nine acres of farmland to the community on the condition it distribute 25 pounds of flour to its "poor worthy widows" every Christmas.

The village, population 4,000, has not missed a Christmas since, though it has made some changes. From the first, the flour was given to all widows, apparently in the belief that is what Gaunt would have wanted.

There are now 110 widows on the distribution list, updated by a village administrative assistant who pores over the obituaries in the newspaper.

Occasionally, a widow will decline the offer, usually because she doesn't bake or is allergic to flour or sugar. But that is rare.

"One lady will make zucchini bread and give to us," Fox said. "And around Christmastime a batch of cookies is likely to show up at random. It makes you feel good."

Lottie Phillips, 73, said she uses the flour and sugar to make cornbread, cakes, sugar cookies and fudge.

Maxine Grubb, 76, said she is especially glad to get the flour and sugar in the winter, because it saves her from having to go to the grocery store.

Gaunt intended that the rent from the land pay for his gift, which cost about \$900 this year. The land is now a park, with a swimming pool, baseball diamonds and soccer fields, and the pool admission fees pay for the flour and sugar, which the village buys

"The first time I got it I didn't know whether to laugh or cry."

PAT HUBBARD
widow

from a grocery store.

No one knows why Gaunt chose this particular legacy, but local historian Phyllis Jackson noted that most women did not hold jobs then and were often left penniless when their husbands died.

"Bread is the staff of life. If you had bread, you could survive for a while," she said. "There is hardly a widow in Yellow

Springs — a village that is two-thirds white — who does not know Gaunt's name."

"This Wheeling Gaunt was a man who had been a slave. I don't know how well he was treated or how poorly he was treated, but he didn't have any freedom," Hubbard said. "But he still found it in his heart to give to others." "I guess it's one of the sweetest things in life," she said.

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