



**The Washington Collection**



The Liberty Tree, a massive elm in Boston, became a meeting place for opposition to taxation and British authority. It likely stood for decades before 1765, by which time it was already mature. During protests against the Stamp Act, colonists hung an effigy (a stuffed dummy) of Andrew Oliver, who was the official responsible for enforcing the tax in the city. The original tree did not survive the war. In 1775, British loyalists cut it down as a symbolic attempt to crush colonial resistance.

# A Walk Through the American Revolution: *One Rug at a Time*



Hooked rugs by Therese Shick, Charlene Chapman, Jeanne Surdi, and Lucy Walsh



This hooked rug, completed by Karen Larsen, is tied to Paul Revere's Midnight Ride "One if by land, two if by sea." Lanterns were hung in Boston's Old North Church to signal the movement of British troops.

## ABOUT THE GROUP

The Hunterdon County Rug Artisans Guild of Flemington, New Jersey, has been preserving the art of rug hooking since 1976, growing into a collaborative group dedicated to education and storytelling through textiles. Through demonstrations, exhibitions, and community involvement, they continue to keep this centuries-old craft both relevant and thriving.

In honor of America's 250th, their 1776 Hooked Rug Project brings together individual members' work into a unified visual narrative, interpreting the life, spirit, and sacrifice of the Revolutionary era through wool and linen. Over 60 themed rugs will be exhibited throughout the year, with expanded displays planned across western New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania.

### Rug by: Lucy Walsh of Clinton, New Jersey



## Ten Crucial Days of 1776

The "Ten Crucial Days" refers to a decisive period from December 25, 1776, to January 3, 1777, when the course of the American Revolution shifted. The Continental Army had suffered repeated losses, soldiers' enlistments were about to expire, and the British believed the rebellion was nearly over. On the night of December 25, 1776, George Washington made a bold decision to lead his troops across the ice-filled Delaware River even though many soldiers had no proper winter clothing. They launched a surprise attack on Hessian (German) troops in Trenton, securing a decisive victory as the enemy was caught off guard following the Christmas holiday. This moment revived morale, proved the Continental Army could win, and shifted the trajectory of the war. Without this moment, the fight for independence may have ended before it truly began. For rug makers, this moment represents endurance in the face of hardship and faith when success seems unlikely.

# Symbols of a Rising Nation



1. The Grand Union Flag, used in 1775–1776, featured 13 red and white stripes representing the colonies. It was reportedly raised by George Washington and tells the story of how the colonies were united, but not yet fully independent.
2. The Bennington-style flag is one of the most recognizable early American designs, featuring 13 stars in a circle and 76 representing the year of independence.



Left Photo: The rug on the headboard was hooked by Laura McElroy, and the rugs lying on the bed were hooked by various group members, including Lucy Walsh, Wendy Curtis, Charlene Chapman, Sharon Ballard, Linda Ehly, Katie Kriner, and Jane Repko.

3. The “Appeal to Heaven” Pine Tree Flag was used by early American naval forces under George Washington. The pine tree represents New England’s strength and resources, and the phrase “when earthly justice fails, one appeals to a higher authority—God.”

Sons of Liberty Rug. “Join or Die” and the Boston Tea Party rug depicting the 1773 protest in Boston Harbor, where colonists boarded British ships and dumped tea into the harbor.



The phrase “Join, or Die” originated in a 1754 political cartoon by Benjamin Franklin and was adopted by the Sons of Liberty. The segmented snake represented the colonies, suggesting that, divided, they would fail. The Boston Tea Party rug represents the shift from complaint to action.



## “Issue the Orders, Sir”

Spoken on the eve of a near-impossible assault, “Issue the orders, Sir” captures the moment when resolve overcame hesitation. Anthony Wayne—often called “Mad Anthony” for his boldness—was chosen by George Washington to lead the assault on Stony Point on July 15–16, 1779. He was warned of the extreme danger— the fort was strong, the terrain was unforgiving, and failure likely meant heavy loss, but he pressed against the odds.





4. "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death!" references the 1775 speech delivered by Patrick Henry at the Virginia Convention. At the time, many colonists were still debating reconciliation with Britain, and Henry's words pushed the conversation forward, urging that freedom was worth the ultimate sacrifice.

5. The Hornet's Nest of Rebellion draws from a phrase used by the British to describe the growing unrest in the colonies. It suggests that it is contained but, once disturbed, becomes volatile, widespread, and difficult to control.



6. The Easton Flag: The Easton flag is traditionally associated with the public reading of the Declaration of Independence in Easton on July 8, 1776, though its exact origins remain debated, with some historians linking the surviving example to Captain Abraham Horn's militia company during the War of 1812.

7. The George Rogers Clark Flag rug represents that the Revolution was not confined to but extended into remote, contested lands. His most famous achievement was the 1779 capture of Fort Vincennes (in present-day Indiana). The red and green stripes symbolize a struggle for control of the land.

8. The Moultrie Flag is considered one of the first American flags flown in battle. In June 1776, British naval forces attacked Fort Sullivan, and the flag was shot down. It was retrieved by a soldier and raised again.

9. The Green Mountain Boys Flag: They were a militia group formed in the region that would later become Vermont. They defended local land rights against New York and captured Fort Ticonderoga in 1775.



10. This rug features one of the most powerful lines of the Revolutionary era, written by Thomas Paine in *The American Crisis*: "These Are the Times That Try Men's Souls." It was written during one of the darkest periods of the war and read aloud to soldiers to strengthen morale.

11. A scene of Valley Forge shows the reality those words were meant to endure. Paired together, these rugs show both the words and reality of the Revolution, where resolve was tested in the long, uncertain seasons.

Together, these rugs have become a stitched record of a nation in the making, capturing its uncertainty, resolve, and lasting spirit through symbols, words, and scenes drawn from the Revolutionary era. As they are completed and exhibited throughout the year, they invite viewers to step closer to observe the artistry, reflect on the people, places, and perseverance behind the scenes.



Archer Basket Tavern Sign, 13"x 18", wool on linen, #7. Designed and hooked by Julianne Kenney, Allentown, New Jersey, who is an avid *A Primitive Place* reader.