



THE EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM of EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY
Making history personal

For Immediate Release

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In the Footsteps of Sergeant York

A Feature Exhibition at the Museum of East Tennessee History

January 20 – July 8, 2018

(Knoxville, Tenn.) Between 2006 and 2009, an international team of historians, archeologists, and geographers traveled to the Western Front battlefields of World War I to rediscover and document where Fentress County-native Sergeant Alvin C. York made his heroic stand against overwhelming odds and was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courage under fire. *In the Footsteps of Sergeant York*, the exhibition opening at the Museum of East Tennessee History from the Museum of the American Military Experience, showcases this groundbreaking research and allows visitors to retrace the steps of one of America's best-known military heroes.



Alvin C. York is one of the most decorated and colorful soldiers of World War I. York was born of humble beginnings in Pall Mall as the third of 11 children, and raised in a one-room log cabin. Nearly 100 years ago, on Oct. 8, 1918, York displayed valor and courage worthy of a Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Croix de Guerre, the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur, and later, a major motion picture, when he single-handedly killed 25 German soldiers and captured 132 more in a battle in the Argonne Forest in France. Until now, the movie *Sergeant York*, starring Gary Cooper, has provided the most compelling story of York.

In the Footsteps of Sergeant York opens at the Museum of East Tennessee History on Saturday, January 20, and will run through July 8, 2018. The exhibition, produced by the Museum of the American Military Experience, includes 18 exhibit panels, eight exhibit cases of artifacts, a documentary film, and a supporting interactive website. The East Tennessee Historical Society augmented the exhibition with East Tennessee stories and artifacts. It includes a bible carried by Sgt. York during WWI and later carried by a friend's son who had it with him in WWII and every day until he died at the age of 94, as well as examples of American and German gas masks, U.S. uniforms, medals, banners, firearms, and wartime souvenirs.

One of the most compelling features of the exhibit is that visitors are invited to walk through a life-sized trench much like the ones American troops hunkered down in during the war. Museum visitors will develop a sense of York's home life through a sampling of items from the York home, experience the sounds of war and machine gun fire, view clips from the famous movie portraying Sergeant York's life, and take away a copy of his draft card, where he claims his exemption from the draft is that he "don't want to fight."



Recreated WWI trench for museum visitors to walk through.

The East Tennessee Historical Society will provide a variety of corresponding programs throughout the exhibit's run, including a lecture on "Path to War: How the First World War Created Modern America" with Michael Neiberg, PhD, on Sunday, February 11, and a screening of the film *Sergeant York* on Sunday, February 18, with commentary by Dr. Michael Birdwell, professor of history at Tennessee Tech University and curator of Alvin C. York's Papers. These programs are presented in partnership with the University of Tennessee Center for the Study of War and Society and the State of Tennessee World War I Commission. Community partners include Tennessee State Parks, Sergeant York Patriotic Foundation, and the Knox County Public Library.

About East Tennessee Historical Society

Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society is widely acknowledged as one of the most active history organizations in the state and enjoys a national reputation for excellence in programming and education. For 184 years the East Tennessee Historical Society has been helping East Tennesseans hold on to our unique heritage—recording the events, collecting the artifacts, and saving the stories that comprise the history we all share.

The Museum of East Tennessee History is open 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Saturday; and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Sunday. Museum Admission is \$5.00 for adults, \$4.00 for seniors, and FREE for children under 16. Each Sunday admission is FREE to all and ETHS members always receive FREE admission. The Museum is located in the East Tennessee History Center, 601 South Gay Street, Knoxville, TN 37901. For more information about the exhibition, scheduling a school tour, or visiting the museum, call (865) 215-8824, email eths@eastTNhistory.org, or visit www.easttnhistory.org.



Recreated German pillbox with machine guns.

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