The Mouse in the Museum

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"Cheese--still proceeding from the milky way, is nature's purest, plain and simple food; cheese is a lux'ry, when like this 'tis good."

Quote excerpted from Thomas Kennedy's poem Ode to the Mammoth Cheese presented to Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, by the inhabitants of Cheshire, Massachusetts and dated January 1, 1802.
I come from a long line of museum mice.

My ancestor lived in a house with the Peale family all the way back in 1794.

Charles Willson Peale was an artist and avid collector.

In 1782, he opened some rooms of his home to the public as a museum.

It's feeling a little crowded...
MOVING DAY ALREADY?

HOLD ON!

THE FAMILY WAS INVITED TO LIVE IN A NEWLY CONSTRUCTED BUILDING THAT HOUSED THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

THEY HAD MORE SPACE FOR THEIR GROWING FAMILY AND GROWING COLLECTION.
SMACK

A MASSIVE MASTODON SKELETON WAS THE MUSEUM’S PRIDE AND JOY

THERE WAS EVEN A MOUSE SKELETON FOR SCALE!

SO THAT’S WHAT HAPPENED TO UNCLE FRED...
Sometimes, she would see other animals at the museum.

Is that cake?

Eek!

George!
SO HOW ARE YOU?

NOT VERY GOOD.

I WAS WONDERING WHAT THAT SIGN WAS ABOUT.

YEAH....

I'M 15, AND THAT'S LONG ENOUGH FOR ME.

MY FEATHERS ARE RATTY, MY CLAWS ACHE....

I'M EVEN TOO OLD TO FLY LIKE I USED TO!

WELL, I'LL MISS YOU WHEN YOU GO.

AW, DON'T BE SAD! I'LL NEVER REALLY LEAVE YOU.

IN THE END, HE WAS RIGHT.

THE BALD EAGLE NEVER REALLY LEFT THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION.
Over the years, many animals lived in the museum’s menagerie. But the bear scared my great-grandma the most.

One night, he broke into the house!

Get the door!

Slam!

Oh my goodness! What are we going to do?

The bear was quieter once he joined the permanent collection. Spooky.
The first science museum in America quickly became popular. Step right up!

They held scientific lectures, performed artistic demonstrations, and added to their impressive collection.

But at the end of the day, the museum was also a home.
BUT ENOUGH OF MY GREAT-GRANDMAS MUSEUM...
I WANT TO SHOW YOU MINE!

IT'S NOT THE SAME ONE THAT MY GREAT GRANDMA LIVED IN, OF COURSE.

MY MUSEUM IS IN BALTIMORE, NOT PHILADELPHIA.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED!
HUMANS DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE,
AND THERE'S DEFINITELY NO BEARS BREAKING IN!

SOME THINGS ARE SIMILAR—WE HAVE A MASTODON TOO!

AND IT'S THE BEST HOME I COULD ASK FOR.
**1776**
The Peale family moves from Maryland to Pennsylvania. Lucy and Scarborough Williams, the Peale's enslaved servants, accompany them along with their son Moses.

**1782**
A room is added to Charles Willson Peale's home so that he can display his portraits. The art gallery develops into a collection with preserved insects and animals.

**1783**
After drawing mastodon bones in the portrait gallery, Charles Willson Peale is inspired to transform his gallery into a public museum.

**1794**
The Peale family moves their home and museum to a new building constructed by the American Philosophical Society.

**1801**
A mastodon skeleton is unearthed by Charles Willson Peale. It's displayed for the first time on Christmas Eve.

**1802**
Peale's Philadelphia Museum expands to the Pennsylvania State House, known today as Independence Hall.

**1810**
The Philadelphia Museum is completely moved into Independence Hall.

**1814**
Rembrandt Peale opens a museum in Baltimore, Maryland. Now known as the Peale, this is the first building in the United States designed and built to be a museum.
ANDERSON, WILLIAM T., EDITOR

ARLotta, C. J.

CHernick, Karen

Colangelo, Maggie and Bernard K. Means
(2023) TALES FROM THE VIRTUAL CURATION LAB NO. 1. COMIC BOOK PUBLISHED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS COMPASS. ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION: HTTPS://SCHOLARSCOMPASS.VCU.EDU/VCL_COMICS_PUBS/3/

(2021) FOUNDING MONSTERS. COMIC BOOK PUBLISHED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS COMPASS. ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION: HTTPS://SCHOLARSCOMPASS.VCU.EDU/FOUNDING_MONSTERS/1/

(2021) FOUNDING MONSTERS TALES. COMIC BOOK PUBLISHED ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS COMPASS. ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION: HTTPS://SCHOLARSCOMPASS.VCU.EDU/FOUNDING_MONSTERS/2/

DIethorn, Karie

Dugatkin, Lee Alan
(2020) BEHIND THE CRIMSON CURTAIN: THE RISE AND FALL OF PEALE'S MUSEUM. BUTLER BOOKS, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

Greifenstein, Charles

Sellars, Charles Coleman

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Maggie Colangelo is a comic artist and illustrator based in Richmond, Virginia. By combining art, science, and history, she aims to engage, entertain, and educate her audience.

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What do a killer bear, a not-so-regal eagle, and the massive bones of an extinct elephant have in common?

Come learn with the museum mouse as she spins a tale of her ancestor’s life in America’s first successful public museum.