

# Madame Tussauds

WASHINGTON D.C. ★

## THE LIFE OF MADAME MARIE TUSSAUD

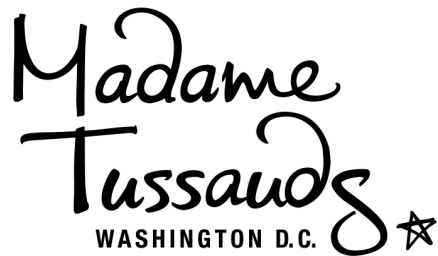
### **An Extraordinary History**

In 1761, Madame Tussaud was born Marie Grosholtz in Strasbourg, France. Her father, a German soldier, died in battle before her birth. By age six, Marie moved to Paris with her mother, who worked as a housekeeper for Dr. Philippe Curtius, a doctor and wax modeler, and became his prodigy. In 1770, Dr. Curtius opened a museum featuring life-size wax figures that immediately became popular among Parisians and visiting royalty. In 1778, Marie had enough experience to create a wax portrait of the French writer, Voltaire. Two years later, she was appointed art tutor to Madame Elisabeth, the sister of Louis XVI, and lived at the magnificent Palace of Versailles for the next nine years.

In 1789, at the request of Dr. Curtius, Marie returned to Paris. Dr. Curtius was involved with the revolutionary movement, entertaining its leaders at his house and participating in the storming of the Bastille. Once the French Revolution erupted, Marie was commanded by the regime to make death masks of many prominent figures such as King Louis XVI and his wife, Queen Marie Antoinette. She had the horrid task of searching through piles of dead bodies to recover heads, many of them victims of the guillotine. Dr. Curtius' exhibition continued to flourish as people flocked to see the likenesses of the men and women whose ruthless determination for social and political change reshaped their lives. In 1794, Dr. Curtius died and Marie solely inherited his exhibition.



A year later, she married Francois Tussaud, a civil engineer, and by 1800, she had given birth to a daughter, who later died, and two sons, Joseph and Francis. During



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the Napoleonic Wars, France was in a state of turmoil and visitors to the attraction decreased. Concerned with her future success and the country's economic decline, Madame Tussaud moved to England without her husband in 1802. Taking her collection, she crossed the English Channel with her elder son Joseph and was later joined by Francis. She never returned to Paris, nor did she see her husband again.

During the next 33 years, Madame Tussaud toured every major city in Britain with her collection. By 1835, tired of traveling, she established a site in London, not far from the present exhibition on Baker Street. Her last work was a self-portrait, created eight years before she died in 1850 at age 89. By then, her name was as famous as her exhibition. She left her collection to her two sons, who, with her grandchildren, continued the business. Today, The Merlin Entertainments Group operates the attraction and ensures that the spirit, artistry and vision of Madame Tussaud live on.

For more than 200 years, Madame Tussauds has been entertaining and educating millions of people with its signature wax figures. Madame Tussauds has locations in London, Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Las Vegas, New York, Shanghai, and Washington D.C. Madame Tussauds welcomes its 8<sup>th</sup> attraction in Berlin in the Summer of 2008 and its 9<sup>th</sup> attraction in Hollywood in Spring 2009.

Madame Tussauds attractions are owned and operated by the Merlin Entertainments Group, the leading name in location based, family entertainment, which has seen the most successful and dynamic growth of any company in the sector over the last five years. The world's No 2 visitor attraction operator, Merlin aims to deliver memorable and rewarding experiences to its 30 million visitors worldwide, through its iconic global and local brands, and the commitment and passion of its managers and 13000 employees.