





**AMERICA'S 250<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**

**BRINGING THAT**

**CHAMPIONSHIP  
PARADE VIBE.**

**ALL. YEAR. LONG.**

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**ON THE COVER:**  
Illustrator Linda Baritski created an image for the 250th in Philly using historic city icons, from Ben Franklin to soft pretzels.

**We'd love your feedback!**

As a subscriber, your opinion is important to us. Please take a moment to complete our survey on the 250th in Philly Sunday Special.

1776  
PHILLY  
2026



A glimpse of life in Center City from 1876 at the site of Independence Hall. Expect more people, and fewer horses, in 2026.  
Courtesy of Library of Congress.

## PLAYOFF ENERGY, ALL YEAR LONG

Philly will be buzzing in 2026. We'll have the FIFA World Cup, the MLB All-Star Game, and a slew of celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The city expects over 1 million additional tourists throughout the year, which means our usual summer lull will be replaced by an energy akin to Red October.

1776 marked the start of the American project, when

the country's July 4th rebuke of tyranny changed the world. And, as Mike Newall's story notes in this 250th in Philly Sunday Special: It all happened here.

That's worth celebrating — with your neighbors and with visitors. Between new art installations, major sporting events, 52 Weeks of Firsts and other big ideas being executed all year, 2026 will feel like one party after another.

And it's happening here. — *Evan Weiss*



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# WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

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**PHILLY WILL CELEBRATE THE NATION'S 250TH  
BIRTHDAY IN OUR SIGNATURE STYLE THROUGHOUT 2026.**

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**By Mike Newall**  
MNEWALL@INQUIRER.COM

**N**owhere will celebrate America's 250th anniversary like Philadelphia. Because nowhere else can celebrate the national milestone like Philadelphia.

Philly is where it happened.

Only in Philadelphia, on July 4, 1776, did 56 sweat-soaked delegates of the Second Continental Congress stride into sweltering Independence Hall to stake their necks on an idea. In the course of human events, it had become time to declare self-evident truths. All men are created equal and endowed by certain unalienable rights.

Some men, that is.

This unforgivable erasure would have reverberations to this day. And nowhere are the centuries-old wounds of that betrayal more visible than



Jon Krause / For The Inquirer

**EVERYONE IS  
PULLING OUT  
THE RED CARPET.  
EVERY MUSEUM.  
EVERY CULTURAL  
INSTITUTION. EVERY  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ORGANIZATION.  
EVERYONE IS DOING  
SOMETHING  
SPECIAL.”**

in the poverty, violence, and inequality preventing so many Philadelphians in their pursuit of happiness.

But the document was still the most revolutionary freedom document humankind had ever known. A single piece of parchment composed of elegant, unwavering prose that defied and dared an empire, forever reordered the rights of man, and drew the eyes of humanity — and judgments of history — upon our humble burg.

Their work for the day done — and in keeping with the rest of the Founders' stay in the City of Brotherly Love — the framers presumably dusted off their wigs, loosened up their waistcoats, and repaired to the cooling comfort of the City Tavern for a rager for the ages.

Only in Philadelphia.

### 'PHILLY IS BEYOND READY'

Two-and-half centuries later, the eyes of the world again fall upon our Philly — for yet another rager for the ages.

In Philly fashion, the city's preparations for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, also known as the Semiquincentennial, stumbled to a rocky start. Poor funding, a lack of leadership, and miscommunication plagued early stages of Philly's 250th party planning.

But in truer Philly fashion, dozens of passionate Philadelphian civil servants, cultural and civic leaders, artists, volunteers, and philanthropic foundations rallied to ensure the city where it happened met the moment.



Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, left, pictured with former aide Max Weisman, has been a key planner of Philly's Semiquincentennial celebrations. Erin Blewett / For The Inquirer

Only a year ago, during a 2026 preparedness meetings, worried planners requested \$100 million from city and state coffers to fund festivities and programming worthy of democracy's birthplace. They have received it.

"A year ago, we were having a conversation about, 'Are we ready?'; 'Is the money there?'; 'Can we pull this off?'" said Max Weisman, a former aide to Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, a key planner. "Yes, yes, yes."

Philadelphia is ready, the planners say. Have no doubt about it.

These Philly-loving patriots say they have organized a once-in-a-lifetime party equal to the city's unparalleled role in history — and its irrepressibly proud personality.

"Philly is beyond ready," said Kathryn Ott Lovell, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Visitor Center Corporation and Philadelphia250, the city's key planning partner for 2026. "Everyone is pulling out the red carpet. Every museum. Every cultural institution. Every neighborhood organization. Everyone is doing something special for the company that's coming."

### A 'REINTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD'

Look around. Everywhere signs abound of the already-underway party. In the scores of new museum exhibits grandly exploring every bit of power and contradiction enshrined in the Declaration bellowed out of Philadelphia 250 years ago. In the abundance of plans for neighborhood programming and beautifications that bring the party to the people in 2026. In new ventures honoring Philly diversity and pride. In the polish and fresh paint in the works for the Historic District and nearby corridors.

Hey, Philly cleans up when it needs to.

It was visible when a parade of ships sailed along the Delaware in October to kick off the 250th anniversary of the Navy, founded in Philly. And it was heard in the crisp salutes and solemn hymns of the Marines who crowded Old City in November to mark their branch's founding, also in Philly in 1775. It builds in the excitement of clock-ticking preparations for the string of big-ticket events that will grace Philadelphia in 2026.

Six FIFA World Cup matches, with a summer fan festival and volunteer-training campus. The MLB All-Star Game. A pumped-up Fourth of July with to-be-announced special guests. TED Democracy talks featuring citizen speakers from Philly and beyond, exploring democracy's painful past and uncertain present.

It rings out in the genuine excitement of Philadelphians who have worked tirelessly in unceasing dedication to the principle that Philadelphians know how to throw a party.

"People just want to be a part of this," Weisman said.

A party that not only meets the moment but lifts Philadelphia into a more prosperous future. Before city planners fully found their 250th footing earlier this year, Philly tourism and cultural leaders banded together to seize the opportunity. With more than 500,000 visitors expected for the World Cup alone, they aim to reintroduce Philadelphia to the world.

"Or introduce ourselves for the very first time to people who do not know Philadelphia or have a very narrow view of Philadelphia," said Angela Val, president and CEO of Visit Philadelphia, the nonprofit that serves as the city's official leisure-tourism marketing agency. "We don't take these big events lightly. They are investments. This is really an opportunity to set ourselves up for success in 2026 and beyond."



Julie Benbassat / For The Inquirer

## PARTIES OF THE PAST

We've been here before.

Every 50 years since 1876, the nation's Centennial year, and America's first major birthday bash, Philly has dusted off its wig to get down. Each of these events came with larger national wounds.

"Before every one of these fairs, there's a scar," said David Brigham, librarian and CEO of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, referring to Philly's previous national birthday parties. "There's always been a conflict and a pain."

And in these moments, Philly has strove to be a salve, he said. Most of the time, anyway.

In 1876, when America reeled from unhealed wounds of the Civil War, Philadelphia built a small city in Fairmount Park — and hosted 10 million people from 37 countries. The showcase of growing American innovation and economic prowess aimed to heal a ruptured nation. Its massive Main Exhibition Building — at the time, the largest building in the world — remains today as the Please Touch Museum.

In 1926, as America emerged from the carnage of World War I, our Sesquicentennial marked the building of the Ben Franklin Bridge, the transformation of what is now FDR Park, and the construction of a temporary, gleaming, utopian metropolis in South Philly.

The Bicentennial in 1976 led to the creation of the Mann Center and the African American Museum in Philadelphia, even if the party itself was marred by Mayor Frank Rizzo's heavy-handed security — he summoned 15,000 National Guard members.

We've been here before. And we aren't perfect.

As ready as Philadelphia stands, next year's commemoration will not include the big legacy projects of past celebrations, the bridges, stadium, and new museums.

But maybe that's not what this moment is about, anyway.

## AN UNFINISHED JOURNEY

Just as past planners grappled with the questions of their American moment, Philadelphia organizers are doing the same now.

"It's a commemoration of why our republic was created," Lovell said. "But also about a recommitment to the ideals that were established. We were founded on these basic principles and values that the Founding Fathers fought over. And we're still fighting over it."

It's that same point — the power and fragility of our American experiment — that breathes powerful life into the Museum of the American Revolution's ongoing landmark exhibit, "The Declaration's Journey."

The museum's most ambitious exhibit ever explores the 250-year global impact of the Declaration — how words written and proclaimed in Philadelphia changed the world, inspiring revolutions and freedom movements through the centuries.

"The American Revolution is not synonymous with the Revolutionary War," said R. Scott Stephenson, president of the museum. "It is a centuries-long, ongoing experiment in liberty, equality, and self-government."

And that journey's not yet over.

The birth of democracy in Philadelphia, and the worldwide struggle to



The U.S. and England soccer teams faced off in Philly in 1976 during the Bicentennial Soccer Cup. 2026 will bring several FIFA World Cup matches to the Linc. Courtesy of AP

sustain it, remains the most significant event since the birth of Christ, said filmmaker Ken Burns. (And here we thought it was Super Bowl LII.)

The American war is over, but the revolution is not, said Burns, whose 12-hour docuseries, *The American Revolution*, is streaming on PBS.

All we were promised was the pursuit, he said.

And the republic the Founders produced stands the most divided and tested it has been in decades, with core disagreements about its very foundations.

It is only right, then, that Philadelphians grapple with this American moment on a global stage. Who else but us?

In every way, being America's birthplace still shapes Philadelphia. Where else is its hallowed iconography such a daily staple? Where else does its symbolism so powerfully frame civic successes — and failure? Every sports triumph and cultural happening. Every fight for equality and rights.

Where else does a city so intrinsically bear the burden and pride of a document that turned the world upside down?

Where else but where it all happened?

Only in Philadelphia.

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Anuj Shrestha/ For The Inquirer



# A BANNER YEAR FOR SPORTS

**SOCCER, GOLF, BASEBALL, BASKETBALL, AND CYCLING ALL HAVE BIG-TIME 2026 EVENTS THAT RUN THROUGH PHILLY.**

**By Christian Red**  
FOR THE INQUIRER

Philadelphia sports fans of a certain age remember the city's golden era, when all four professional teams advanced to their league's championship series or title game in the same calendar year.

"The city was crazy that summer," said Larry Bowa, the former Phillies shortstop who was a member of the 1980 World Series champion team. "Every team went to the finals, and we were the only one that won."

Yes, the Sixers, Flyers, and Eagles all came up short of the brass ring in 1980 (and January 1981 for the Birds' Super Bowl loss), but Philadelphia morphed into a sports nirvana during those 12 months.

Bowa said he thinks the 2026 Philadelphia sports scene will be even more electric, when the City of Brotherly Love hosts a bevy of major sporting events throughout the year. It starts with the March Madness men's basketball opening rounds at Xfinity Mobile Arena, and stretches through the end of August, when the Philadelphia Cycling Classic is staged.

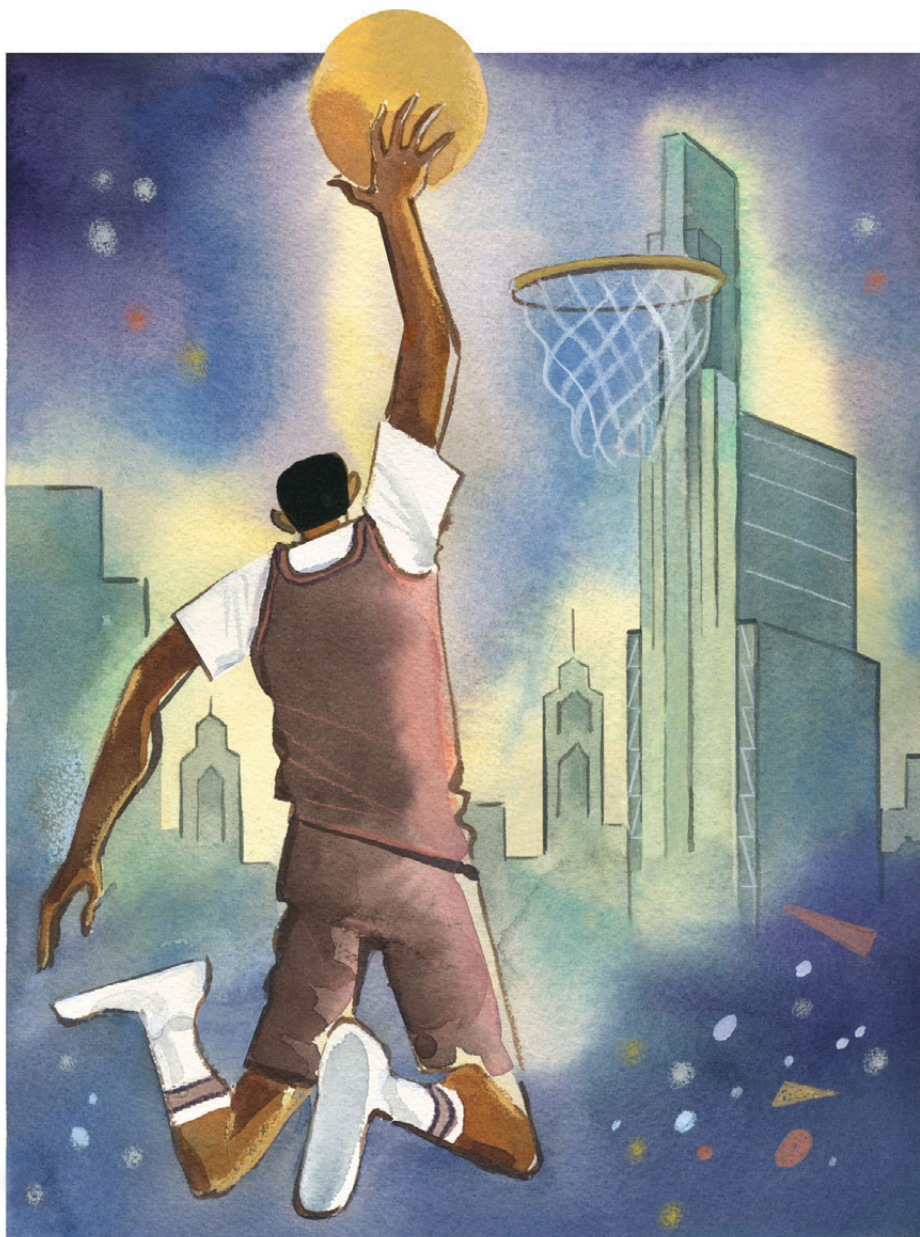
In between those two marquee events, the 108th PGA Championship

will be played at Aronimink Golf Club, followed by six FIFA World Cup matches held at Lincoln Financial Field, the last of which is scheduled for July 4, the 250th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress.

If that's not enough, Citizens Bank Park in mid-July will be the host site for the Major League Baseball All-Star Game, the fifth time the Midsummer Classic has been played in Philadelphia, but the first at the Phillies' current home stadium.

Imagine if the four Philly pro teams have a 1980 redux — that would be the cherry on top of Billy Penn's hat.

"I think it's going to be awesome," Bowa said of the upcoming sports extravaganza. "People come from all over, and, whether it's fair or not, Philly gets a bad rap sometimes. People that don't live here, they don't understand the passion that the fans have. It's a great city. The fans are great. [You] can enjoy some of the history downtown. It's going to be fun to sit back and watch."



Marcellus Hall / For The Inquirer

## MARCH MADNESS: NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL

None of the area men's basketball teams that constitute the Big 5 (now 6 including Drexel University) is currently in the Top 25 rankings as of this writing, but that could change by the turn of the calendar.

Even if no Philly-area team punches its Big Dance ticket, St. Joseph's will factor in the 2026 NCAA tourney when the school hosts the first- and second-round games at Xfinity Mobile Arena. The Florida Gators are the defending champions, and when March Madness begins, Philadelphia steps into the college basketball limelight for the opening curtain.

Friday, March 20, and Sunday, March 22; Xfinity Mobile Arena; tickets at [xfinitymobilearena.com](http://xfinitymobilearena.com).

## PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

The 108th edition of one of professional golf's four majors will be staged on the pristine Aronimink Golf Club links. The last time the PGA Championship was staged here was more than 60 years ago, when Hall of Fame legend Gary Player beat Bob Goalby by a stroke.

More recently, Keegan Bradley won the 2018 BMW Championship at Aronimink. Defending champ Scottie Scheffler will be among the star-studded group of golfers descending upon suburban Philly to play for the Wanamaker Trophy. If you miss out on tickets to the PGA Championship, you have another chance to see high-level golf in the region when the U.S. Men's Amateur Championship comes to Merion Golf Club in mid-August.

May 11-17; Aronimink Golf Club, Newtown Square; tickets at [pgachampionship.com](http://pgachampionship.com).



## FIFA WORLD CUP

Soccer's premiere event was last staged in the U.S. over three decades ago, when the USMNT advanced to the Round of 16, before losing to perennial powerhouse Brazil. Now the men's national team has another chance to try to do what no U.S. squad has done before — win soccer's most prestigious award.

Philly will host six of the 2026 FIFA World Cup matches at the Linc: five group stage matches in June, followed by a final group stage match on Independence Day. Facing off in Philly will be Ivory Coast vs. Ecuador (June 14), Brazil vs. Haiti (June 19), France vs. Bolivia, Suriname, or Iraq (June 22), Curacao vs. Ivory Coast (June 25), and Croatia vs. Ecuador (June 27).

June 14-July 4; Lincoln Financial Field; tickets at [fifa.com](https://www.fifa.com).





## MLB ALL-STAR GAME

Bowa was an All-Star in 1976, when the Midsummer Classic was played at Veterans Stadium. But in that doughnut-shaped ballpark, “you had to hit ‘em to get out of there.” Bowa said he thinks the bandbox Citizens Bank Park will be a great venue for baseball’s All-Star gathering, particularly the Home Run Derby.

“This one, they might be taking the upper deck down with these guys as big and strong as they are, and the way the ball jumps in Philly.”

It will be even more entertaining if defending Home Run Derby champ Kyle Schwarber is suited up in a Phillies jersey next year. But if Schwarber departs in free agency, there is still a group of Phillies — Bryce Harper, Trea Turner, Cristopher Sanchez — who could star for the National League.

*July 12-14; Citizens Bank Park; tickets at [mlb.com](http://mlb.com).*

## PHILADELPHIA CYCLING CLASSIC

One of cycling’s jewel events, the Philadelphia Classic has had numerous name iterations over the years, going back to its start in 1985 when it was called CoreStates U.S. Pro Cycling Championship. That year, Eric Heiden — yes, the former U.S. Olympic gold medal-winning speed skater — was champion.

Tour de France legend Greg LeMond has also been a past participant. The route snakes west of Center City and includes the famed Manayunk Wall, a cycling test of will on Levering Street.

*Aug. 30; Planned 14.4-mile circuit goes from Logan Square up Kelly Drive to Manayunk and back; tickets at [philadelphiacyclingclassic.com](http://philadelphiacyclingclassic.com).*



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## JANUARY



**Opening: Philly Pride Visitor Center in Midtown Village**

*Suffs at the Academy of Music — January 6-18*

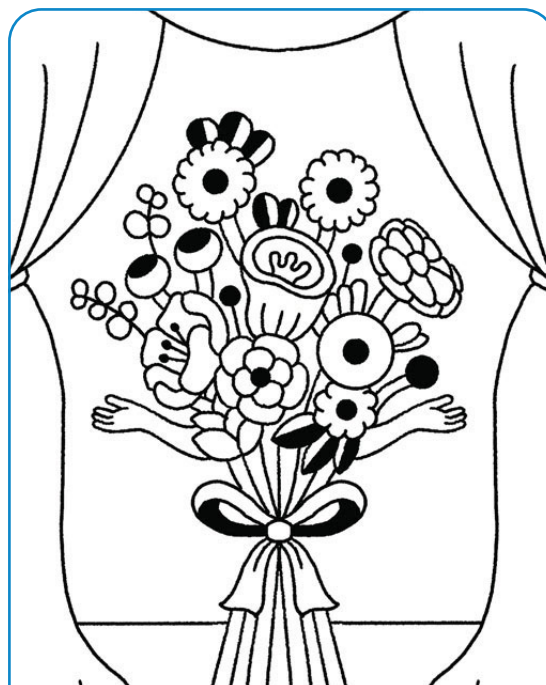
*Philly Is Unrivaled at Xfinity Mobile Arena — January 30*

## FEBRUARY

*New Galleries at the National Constitution Center*

*We the People: Sam Maitin at the Annenberg Center — Through February 21*

*Universal Theme Parks Exhibition at the Franklin Institute — Opening February 14*

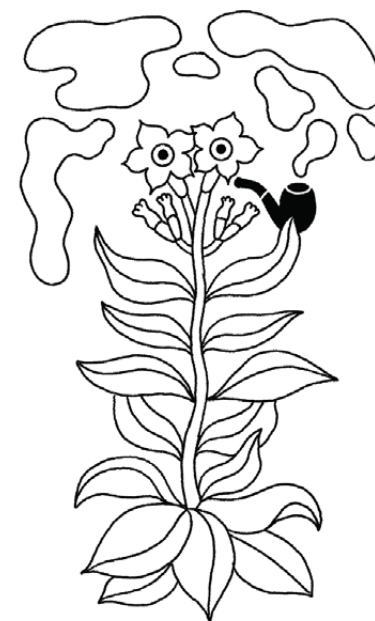


**197th PHS Philadelphia Flower Show — February 28-March 8**

## MARCH

*NCAA Men's Basketball at Xfinity Mobile Arena — March 20 & 22*

*Seeking Profit and Power at the Independence Seaport Museum — Opening March 20*



**Botany of Nations at The Academy of Natural Sciences — Opening March 28**

## **APRIL**

*Flash! Bang! Boom! History of Fireworks* at the Science History Institute — *Opening April 10*

*A Nation of Artists* at the Philadelphia Art Museum — *Opening April 12*

*1776 The Musical* at Walnut Street Theatre — *April 14-May 31*



**Craft Beer Conference and World Beer Cup at the Convention Center — April 20-22**

*These Truths Are Not Self-evident: Stories of the Revolution* at the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center — *Opening April 17*

## **MAY**

*A Nation of Artists* at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

108th PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club — *May 11-17*

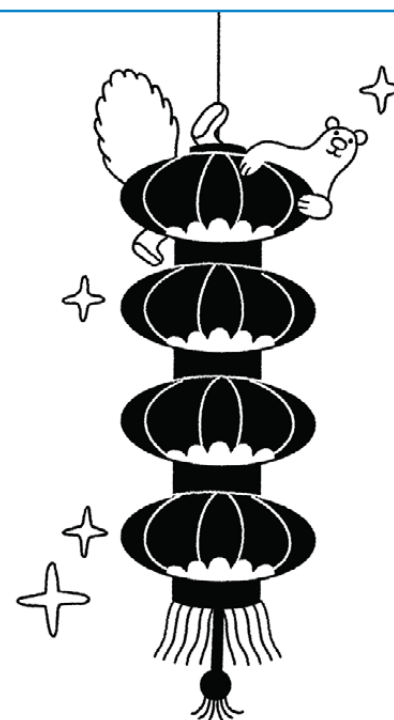
Mahler and Sorey at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts — *May 15-16*



**Beethoven and Marsalis at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts — May 28-31**

*ArtPhilly's What Now* — *May 29-July 4*

## **JUNE**



**Chinese Lantern Festival in Franklin Square — June 4-August 2**

TED Democracy Philadelphia at the Kimmel Center — *June 13*

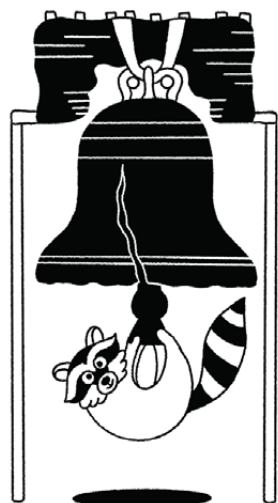
FIFA World Cup 26 and FIFA FanFestival — *June 14-July 4*



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## JUNE

Highmark Mann Center 50th Anniversary Concert with The Philadelphia Orchestra  
— *June 17*



**Welcome America, including the Red, White & Blue To-Do**  
— *June 19-July 4*

Philadelphia Juneteenth Parade & Festival — *June 21*

BalletX's *The Four Seasons Reimagined* at the Highmark Mann Center — *June 2026*

## JULY

Valley Forge National Historical Park's 50th Birthday — *July 3-5*

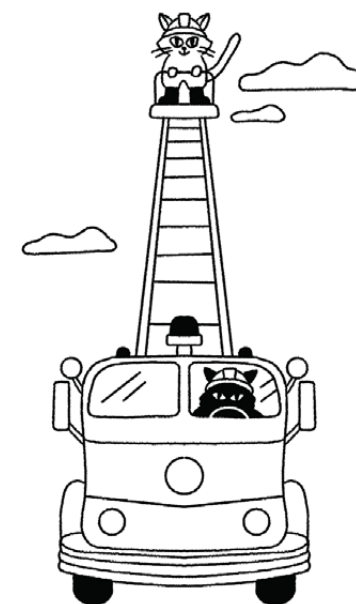
Independence Weekend at the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center — *July 3-5*



**Pennsylvania Longrifles at the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center**  
— *Opening July 18*

MLB All-Star Game at Citizens Bank Park — *July 14*

## AUGUST



**America's 250th Celebration in Newtown** — *August 8*

U.S. Men's Amateur Golf Tournament at Merion Golf Club  
— *August 10-16*

Philadelphia Cycling Classic  
— *August 30*

## **SEPTEMBER**



**Let Freedom Ring at Cherry Street Pier — September 27**

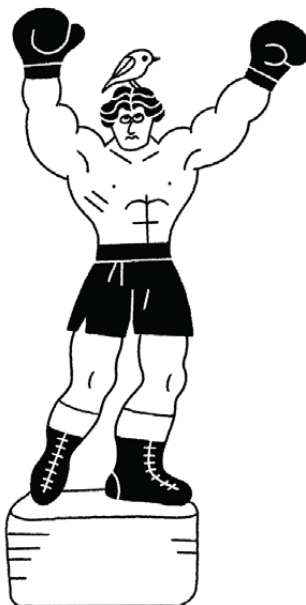
## **NOVEMBER**



**Inquirer Food Fest**

## **DECEMBER**

Washington Crossing  
Commemorates 250 Years



**RockyFest 50: The 50th Anniversary of Rocky**

## **ALL-YEAR / MULTI-SEASON EVENTS**

52 Weeks of Firsts — *Throughout 2026*

Bells Across PA — *Throughout 2026*

Betsy Ross House: Celebrating 250 Years of the American Flag — *Throughout 2026*

*The Declaration's Journey* at the Museum of the American Revolution — *Throughout 2026*

Bear Country Renovation at the Philadelphia Zoo — *Opening Spring 2026*

New Permanent Collection Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts — *Opening Spring 2026*

Neighborhood Tour Series — *Spring & Summer 2026*

Once Upon a Nation — *Spring & Summer 2026*

New Museum at the First Bank of the United States — *Opening 2026*

FloatLab at Bartram's Garden — *Opening 2026*



# WE, THE PEOPLE, HAVE IDEAS

**OVER 600 READERS SUBMITTED SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS THAT PHILLY CAN PUT ITS BEST FOOT FORWARD IN 2026.**

By Stephanie Farr  
SFARR@INQUIRER.COM

**E**arlier this year, I asked for your suggestions for what Philadelphia should create, destroy, or fix in advance of everything — and everyone — coming to our city in 2026.

More than 600 ideas were submitted to The Inquirer for ways to improve the city as we prepare for the nation's 250th anniversary, the FIFA World Cup, the MLB All-Star Game, and the NCAA Division I college basketball tournament next year.

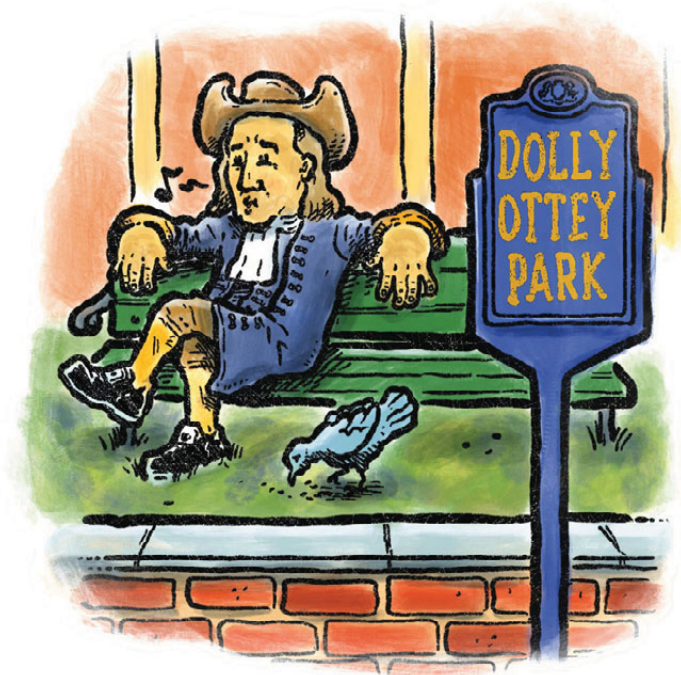
In other words, Philadelphians had thoughts. Of course, there were recurring themes that arose (more on those later), and there were folks who submitted suggestions well beyond the scope of the assignment. While I appreciate people's visions, I don't think we're going to solve school funding, stop gun violence, end courtesy towing, or turn Regional Rail into a German-style S-Bahn by next year.

But there were a lot of great ideas, and so, I now present this edited list, because if I included every suggestion, we'd be here until 2027.

## **SIMPLE THINGS THAT ARE EASY, FREE, OR CHEAP TO DO**

- Cullen Kisner: "Drive around the city, literally section it off like trash trucks do, and remove any unnecessary traffic cones/street work signs/construction barricades/etc. It just [clogs] up the city and makes it look like a perpetual construction zone (which it is, but the tourists don't need to know that)."

- Brendan Yuhás suggests charging \$17.76 for SEPTA passes and Indego bicycle rental





Steve Madden / Staff Artist

passes during the week of Independence Day. He'd also like to see restaurants offer meals for \$17.76.

- Brian Smart suggests illuminating the William Penn statue atop City Hall at night.
- Beth LaPiene: "We need longer pedestrian crossing times on Center City streets. How does anyone cross Broad Street in 15 seconds, especially if it's crowded?" (Another reader raised this issue with Vine Street as well.)

## THINGS THAT TAKE SOME AMOUNT OF TIME AND/OR MONEY TO ADDRESS

• Jason Berkheimer and Rogelio Ayllon separately requested that Philadelphia adopt a new city flag, an idea previously explored by *The Inquirer*. Berkheimer wrote that a new flag is "incredibly important to sew unity in this partisan time" (his pun, not mine), while Ayllon said it could be marketed on merchandise, making it "a win for vendors ... and a win for the city in tax dollars."

• Anonymous: "Install compass roses outside of all El, trolley, subway, PATCO, and Regional Rail access points so people can quickly get an idea of which direction they need to go when reaching the surface street."

• The Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides and numerous readers who submitted their ideas independently would like to see the following reopened for 2026: City Tavern, the Declaration House, the LOVE Park Saucer, and the Second Bank portrait gallery.

• Of course, Philly is all about the Benjamin Franklin too. Tom Rosenberg suggested rehabbing the exterior of Franklin's post office on Market Street. "It's dilapidated and looks awful," he wrote. Rich Armandi bemoaned the fact that a plaque at the Second and Market Street subway stop in Old City that marked the site of Franklin's first print shop has been missing since 2024. He wants it replaced, and he'd like a mural there that envisions what Franklin's print shop might have looked like.

• The Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides (who submitted a lot of great ideas in a well-curated slideshow) would like to see the Franklin Court Printing Office, a replica of an 18th century printing office, open seven days a week, instead of just weekends.

**INSTALL COMPASS  
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SUBWAY, PATCO,  
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RAIL ACCESS  
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## BIG THINGS THAT TAKE TIME, MONEY, AND COOPERATION

• Several people asked for the city and the National Park Service to work together to make Independence Mall “more than a desolate lawn.” One suggested that an “easy change would be to move some existing statues or art installations from more obscure/lower visibility places (like Fairmount Park and Kelly Drive).” Other readers proposed adding trees, benches, and water features.

• Jack Bellis would like to see the concourse below Broad Street (from Market to Locust) turned into a rainy-day attraction with Philly vendors and a centerpiece mini-golf course “created either in part or wholly by school students, in which each of the holes highlights a Philadelphia tourist attraction.”

• Pete Silberman: “My idea is to repurpose the Southwark Piers, also known as Piers 38 and 40, to be playing fields and sports facilities.”

• Mark Methlie’s idea is to “follow Boston’s lead” and create our own version of the Freedom Trail, a trail embedded in roads and sidewalks that leads to notable spots (which I also proposed after visiting Boston in 2024). Methlie, however, suggests multiple trails leading out of the Convention Center, including ones for history, art, science, cultural institutions, and food.

• Bob Dix: “I would love to see the water taxis languishing under 95 to be taken out of mothballs and used for tours or transport ... and they could be used for transit to the FIFA events in FDR.”

• Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides: “Create an introduction park to Elfreth’s Alley at Second Street in the empty lot. Design it to include native shrubs, shade, colonial lamps, benches, and information displays.” (Note: In late November, it was announced that this one is planned to happen!)



## FUN ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

• Tori Beard: “I’m a big fan of a Colonial Day Fest idea. Think Ren Fest, but for colonial-style activities and dress. Bonnets, butter churning, powdered wigs. Could even be held in the Independence Hall area.” (Note: The Museum of the American Revolution hosts an annual living history interpretation weekend called Revolutionary Philadelphia, but it would be great to see it expanded for 2026.)

• The Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides suggests creating a tour and a music festival highlighting The Sound of Philadelphia artists like Teddy Pendergrass, Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes, and Tammi Terrell. I’d like to take it a step further and suggest a music festival in which current Philly musicians pay homage to Philadelphia musicians who came before them, regardless of genre. I’d love to see The Roots play the O’Jays, Jill Scott perform Bessie Smith, and Dr. Dog pay homage to Jim Croce.

• Anonymous: “Pepper pot stew cook-off.”

• Eli Fish: “Turn Headhouse Square into European-style plaza. No cars, tables in the street and under the headhouse cover, live music and outdoor dining. We know this can work because they started to do it during COVID and it was amazing.” (Note: This idea was also raised on Instagram by users who begged the city to “Make Headhouse interesting again.”)

• Hugh Connelly suggests creating an iconic, solar-powered mural that looks like Philadelphia in 1776 during the daytime, but at night when a system of solar-powered lights illuminate it, the “new night image is one of futuristic Philly, a beacon for liberty for the next 250 years.”

• Kevin Fennell: “There should be a steal the Declaration of Independence escape room.” Why yes there should be, along with a “National Treasure treasure hunt,” as suggested by one Instagram user.

## OFF-THE-WALL IDEAS

• Zach Marcum's idea is an official SEPTA cheesesteak joint: "We bring in a real Philly chef who will (for free) design us the perfect cheesesteak for maximum profit and quality balance. We line up sourcing with local suppliers in Philly — and the surrounding areas — I'm talking grain for the bread-type vertical integration — and then set up SEPTA cheesesteak carts throughout not just Philly but the state of Pennsylvania, and hire good local kids paying good wages to cook and distribute these cheesesteaks. As for all the people who are already in the cart business, we bring them in as middle managers or buy them out, or they can sell halal or whatever (sorry ... I'm not a genius). With the profits we fund massive infrastructure improvements, spreading wealth and glory to all."

• Tom Dougherty proposes something like an "Epcot Village," to show off the diversity of Philly's food-and-beverage scene. A potential location could be FDR Park, where Dougherty suggests it could run in conjunction with the Southeast Asian Food Market.

• Thomas Lake's idea is a Schuylkill ferry that would commute people from King of Prussia to the Philadelphia Art Museum and back, with stops in Norristown, Conshohocken, and Manayunk. "Might have to remove some dams?" he wrote. Yeah, a few, plus I'm told the river is far too shallow in spots and some bridges are too low for a ferry to navigate. Even though this one is implausible, it's fun to dream about.

• Catherine Robb Stahl: "You know how Tinker Bell flies down from the Disney castle at night on a zip line? Well, how about having Betsy Ross do the same thing from City Hall??? Fun, huh?!?! What a sight to see!"

• Other off-the-wall ideas submitted without further context included: a community zip line and pool, a Gritty cave, a Gritty statue, secede from Pennsylvania, "Find a better word than Semiquincentennial," hold a "Band things happen in Philadelphia LGBT concert band performance," "No city tax for those who live within 1 mile of a pothole," and "Make it abundantly clear in marketing to other U.S. cities that Philly rules."



## RECURRING THEMES

Properly funding SEPTA is integral to Philly and any plans for 2026, as I said in my original column. While there's since been a measure enacted to ensure it will operate for the next two years, SEPTA's fate remains murky after that. At least a quarter, maybe more, of the responses I received mentioned SEPTA in some way.

But people told me they want to see SEPTA more than just funded. They want it cleaned — deep cleaned — from the stairwells to the seats, like the entire system was exposed to nuclear waste (New Jersey commuters would also like their PATCO stations decontaminated too).

• "Tourists Take Transit. Let's not show the world our dirty underwear," Tally Brennan said via email.

• Scores of Philly-area residents wrote in asking for more public bathrooms, trash cans, water fountains, trees, shade, benches, pocket parks, trash cans, signage to city sites, protected bike lanes, trash cans, street cleaning, trash cans, programs to assist the unhoused, trash cans, murals, and underground parking lots. And for the love of all that is good and holy can we get at least one permanent pedestrian-only street in this city?

• Readers would also like to see the following repaired: the escalators at Jefferson Station, potholes, the lines on the road "so they're visible and you don't have to just guess," "Fix the roads, all of them!" "ITS LIKE A BOMBED WAR ZONE," and sinkholes.

• Many people said the entire Market East corridor needs a whole lot of love. Folks lament that it used to be a destination and now it's filled with shuttered storefronts.

• While we learned in November that Comcast and the Sixers plan to demolish some buildings they own on the 1000 block of Market Street in time for next year's events, it's still unclear what they plan to put there.

• In the remaining vacant storefronts, readers suggested putting pop-up shops, art galleries, experiences, or doing a pop-up Philly History Museum.

• Finally, a very sweet reader asked me: "Please can we have the building on Broad Street that has the graffiti 'Boner 4Ever' painted over??? It's truly an embarrassment."

Sorry, hun, but that's a hard no. It's 4Ever.

**"I'M A BIG FAN OF A COLONIAL DAY FEST IDEA. THINK REN FEST, BUT FOR COLONIAL-STYLE ACTIVITIES AND DRESS. BONNETS, BUTTER CHURNING, POWDERED WIGS. COULD EVEN BE HELD IN THE INDEPENDENCE HALL AREA."**





# IT STARTS WITH ART

**PHILLY'S MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ARE MARKING AMERICA'S 250TH WITH MAJOR EXHIBITS AND OPENINGS.**

**By Elizabeth Wellington**  
EWELLINGTON@INQUIRER.COM

**N**o one throws a “Happy 250th Birthday, America” jammy jam like a Philadelphia museum. Embedded into the fabric of our nation’s birthplace, Philly cultural institutions are gearing up for high-level deep dives into history, fun, folly, and reflection. Just in time for the Semiquincentennial.

Our museums’ dynamic programming for America’s big birthday kicks off on Jan. 1.

The Philadelphia Art Museum, the National Constitution Center, the Museum of the American Revolution, and smaller outfits like Eastern State Penitentiary and Historic Germantown will, as expected, reimagine the history of our republic in an homage to the forefathers’ ingenuity.

Many are also honoring the perspective of marginalized Americans, upon whose backs this country was built.

Mixed into the Semiquincentennial festivities are other milestone birthdays. Carpenters’ Hall will celebrate the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s

250th with an exhibit, historical marker, statewide town halls, and virtual lecture series.

The African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Mummers Museum, and the Please Touch Museum — all born out of the 1976 Bicentennial — are turning 50, expanding permanent exhibitions, hosting artist talks, and welcoming school children on field trips.

The new year also marks Germantown’s the Colored Girls Museum’s 10th anniversary; it will open its fall 2026 season with a rare show from renowned sculptor vanessa german.

In a nod to amusement parks — cornerstones of 20th century American entertainment — the Franklin Institute will premiere “Universal Theme Parks: The Exhibition” in February, taking visitors on a virtual trip through attractions from *Jaws* to *Jurassic World*.

Philly is America’s birthplace. Our 250th birthday energy can’t be outdone. From the looks of it, it won’t be.



Art from the collection of Phillies managing partner John Middleton, pictured here, and his wife, Leigh, will be on display at the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts as part of “A Nation of Artists” in 2026. Jose F. Moreno / Staff Photographer

## PHILADELPHIA ART MUSEUM

The Philadelphia Art Museum will host three major shows in 2026.

### NOAH DAVIS

The art museum’s Morgan, Korman, and Field galleries will feature the work of the late African American artist Noah Davis (1983-2015). Davis’ paintings, sculpture, and works on paper capture the history and intricacies of American Black life from antebellum America through his untimely death. *Jan. 24-April 26.*

### A NATION OF ARTISTS

Paintings, furniture, and decorative arts from Phillies managing partner John Middleton and his wife, Leigh, will center the “A Nation of Artists” exhibit, telling the 300-yearlong story of American creativity. The exhibit is a joint project between the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and is billed as “the most expansive presentation of American art ever mounted in Philadelphia.” *Opens April 12.*

### RISING UP

2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the release of the first Rocky film. To coincide, the Art Museum in April will open “Rising Up: Rocky and the Making of Moments” in the museum’s Dorrance galleries. The exhibit will explore how the Rocky statue outside the museum brings people together. *April 25-Aug. 2.*

## MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The Museum of the American Revolution's "The Declaration's Journey" includes more than 100 objects that speak to the Declaration of Independence's enduring power, complexity, and unfilled promise. A chair that once belonged to Thomas Jefferson and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s prison bench are on display, as well as manuscripts penned by abolitionists, clergymen, and Free African Society cofounders Absalom Jones and Richard Allen. *Through Jan. 3, 2027.*

## PENN MUSEUM

Spear points dating to 3,000 B.C., centuries-old bowls, and 19th century beaded collars are a few of the items that illustrate the lives Lenape Indians led fishing on the banks of the Schuylkill and hunting in Fairmount Park. These are on display at Penn Museum's new Native North American gallery. Visiting curator Jeremy Johnson chose these artifacts because, he said, they best "tell the story of his people — who the Founding Fathers tried to erase." *Through 2027.*

## WEITZMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

On Nov. 16, 1776, the Andrew Doria brigantine arrived in the Caribbean on the British colony St. Eustatius, waving the first national flag of the United States. The Jewish merchants and English settlers, treated poorly by their antisemitic Anglican monarchs, greeted the newly minted Americans with a 13-cannon salute. In that moment, St. Eustatius became the first country to recognize America's sovereignty.

Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History's "The First Salute" exhibit will recount this largely untold story — including how the Jewish merchants smuggled the Americans' gunpowder in tea and rice bags, giving Pirates of the Caribbean meets Hamilton vibes. Artifacts on display will include 18th-century currency, a series of paintings from prominent Jewish Philadelphian Barnard Gratz's art collection, and an actual cannon shot from the island's shores. *From April 23, 2026, through April 2027.*



Visitors at the Museum of the American Revolution in front of a portrait of Absalom Jones, abolitionist and founder of the First African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. Jones' writing are on display. Courtesy of The Museum of the American Revolution

## NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Centered on a rare, centuries-old copy of the U.S. Constitution — a gift from billionaire hedge fund manager Kenneth C. Griffin — the National Constitution Center will present "America's Founding." The gallery will be dedicated to the exploration of our early, colonial principles that led our fight for independence. How do they stand up now? *Opens Feb. 13.*

A second gallery will explore how the Constitution defines roles and balances power between the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government. *Opens in May.*

## AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA

The African American Museum in Philadelphia began its celebration of America's 250th — and its own 50th — with a yearlong nod to the future with "Ruth Carter: Afrofuturism in Costume Design." *Through September.*

In October 2026, AAMP will premiere the extension of its "Audacious Freedom" exhibit. Currently on the ground floor, the exhibit is a study of Black Philadelphians from 1776 to 1876. The expanded show will bring "Audacious Freedom" up to present day and will include 20th-century artists and educators, from Charles Blockson to Jill Scott.



## WOODMERE ART MUSEUM

Inspired by Philadelphia illustrator and friend of Woodmere Jerry Pinkney, the Chestnut Hill museum's Semiquincentennial show, "Arc of Promise," acknowledges America's painful histories of slavery, injustice, and displacement of its Indigenous people while affirming its capacity to rebuild, renew, and evolve. Featuring art by Philadelphians dating to 1790, "Arc of Promise's" paintings, sculptures, maps, and flags explore what freedom and justice for all truly means. *Opens June 20.*

## THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF DREXEL UNIVERSITY

In collaboration with California State University ethnobotanist Enrique Salmón, the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel University will debut "Botany of Nations: Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and the Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery." These centuries-old plants, collected by explorers Meriweather Lewis and William Clark, were a gift to Philadelphia's American Philosophical Society from Thomas Jefferson. Organizers hope the selection of now-pressed plants — prairie turnip, camas root, and Western red cedar — will be a vegetative portal to American frontier life. *From March 28, 2026, through Feb. 14, 2027.*

## THE CLAY STUDIO: CENTER FOR INNOVATION IN CERAMIC ART

Twenty-five artists from 20 Philadelphia cultural institutions will present projects that show how the definition of independence evolved from 1776 through 1876, 1926, 1976, and 2026 under the umbrella of the Clay Studio. The exhibit, "Radical Americana," will start with a compelling show by Kensington potter Roberto Lugo on April 9. Artists will mount additional shows at participating institutions throughout the year, including at the Museum for Art in Wood and Cliveden Historic House. A full list is available at [theclaystudio.org](http://theclaystudio.org). *Opens April 9.*

## MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

Mural Arts is working on several projects that will spruce up the city in 2026. That includes a new focus on the city's entryways, the restoration of several murals, and a collaboration between Free Library of Philadelphia in a community printmaking project. At least three new murals will debut and include a tribute to artists Questlove (of the legendary Roots crew) and Boyz II Men. A refurbished mural in honor of Philadelphia's first director of LGBTQ affairs, the late Gloria Casarez, will be unveiled in Middletown Village's 12th Street Gym. Mural Arts also is partnering with the Philadelphia Historic District on sculptures for next year's 52 Weeks of Firsts programming and with the Bells Across PA program to create Liberty Bell replicas in neighborhoods throughout the city.



Top: Kensington potter Roberto Lugo's works will be on display at the Clay Studio in April as part of the "Radical Americana" exhibit. Courtesy of Princeton University Art Museum. Above: A rendering of a refurbished mural tribute to Gloria Casarez that Mural Arts will unveil at the 12th Street Gym. Steve Weinik / For The Inquirer



# A CITY OF FIRSTS

**THE 52 WEEKS OF FIRSTS PROGRAM CELEBRATES A PHILLY-BORN FIRST — EVERY WEEK, ALL YEAR.**

By Mike Newall  
MNEWALL@INQUIRER.COM

**S**ure, Philly's the birthplace of the nation. But we're also the site of the first hot-air balloon ride (1793), the first selfie (1839), and the first pencil with an attached eraser (1858). So why not celebrate these Philly firsts and many more?

That's the idea behind the Philadelphia Historic District 250th Committee's "52 Weeks of Firsts" in 2026. Every week, all year, there will be a party somewhere in the city honoring a different "Philly-born" first, replete with a "first-ival," storytelling, giveaways, scavenger hunts, and an oversized #1 sculpture made of foam to mark the exact spot, or closest thing to it, of the milestone.

"Philadelphia has always been a city of firsts — from the founding of our nation to innovations that shaped everyday life," said Amy Needle, president and CEO of Historic Philadelphia Inc. "It's an opportunity for residents and visitors alike to go and explore and find these firsts and learn about all the amazing history and innovation that has happened in Philadelphia in the last 250 years."

Fitting with planners' promise to bring the 250th celebration to the neighborhoods, the 52 Weeks festivities will take place across at least 16 different sections of the city, Needle said. In compiling the list, a partnership of representatives from 22 Philly museums and cultural institutions adhered to a strict definition of first from Merriam Webster: "preceding all others in time, order, or importance."

Some Philly firsts are known to every schoolchild. Like the first American flag (thanks, Betsy: 1777). And first naming of the United States (1776). Others may stump even the most ardent Philly booster. Like the country's first public showing of a motion picture (1870), first U.S. weather bureau office (also 1870), and first electronic computer (1945).

The 52 Weeks of First aims to capture all that has made Philly first in the nation throughout the years, Needle said. "There are so many things that Philadelphia has to be excited about," she said.

Here is the full list, with the schedule for the whole year. For a map of events, visit [visitphilly.com/52-weeks-of-firsts](http://visitphilly.com/52-weeks-of-firsts).



Philly's famous firsts include being home to the first American flag (1777) and the first signing of the Constitution (1787). At top, Betsy Ross, played by Carol Spacht, stands in front of the "Birth of Our Nation's Flag" at the Betsy Ross House. Charles Fox / Staff Photographer Above, Artist Howard Chandler Christy's oil-on-canvas rendering of the signing of the Constitution, at Independence Hall. Courtesy of Howard Chandler Christy.

### **First Hot Air Balloon Flight in America: 1793**

The Athenaeum, Jan. 3

### **First Folk Parade: 1901**

Mummers Museum, Jan. 10

### **First Volunteer Fire Company: 1736**

Fireman's Hall Museum, Jan. 17

### **First Professional Basketball League: 1898**

Xfinity Mobile Arena, Jan. 24

### **First Public Girl Scout Cookie Sale: 1932**

PECO Building, Jan. 31

### **First African Methodist Episcopal Congregation: 1794**

Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Feb. 7

### **First Abolitionist Society in America: 1775**

The African American Museum in Philadelphia, Feb. 14

### **First Authentic Chinese Gate Built in America: 1984**

Chinatown Friendship Gate, Chinatown, Feb. 21

### **First Public Protest Against Slavery in America: 1688**

Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust, Feb. 28

### **First Flower Show: 1829**

Pennsylvania Convention Center, March 7

### **First Women's Medical College: 1850**

Drexel University, March 14

### **First Match Folder: 1892**

Science History Institute, March 21

### **First Medical School in America: 1765**

Perelman School of Medicine, March 28

### **First Stadium in America: 1895**

Franklin Field, April 4

### **First Circus Performance in America: 1793**

Philadelphia School of Circus Arts, April 11

### **First Botanical Garden: 1728**

Bartram's Garden, April 18

### **First Postmaster: 1737**

Franklin Court, April 25

A stained glass window, below, from Mother Bethel A.M.E., America's first African Methodist Episcopal congregation. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer



Queen Elizabeth II talks with Girls Scouts in Philadelphia in 1976. Philly was home to the first public Girl Scout cookie sale in 1932. Courtesy of Associated Press

**First American-Made Piano and Sousedphone: 1775/1893**

Ensemble Arts Philly, May 2

**First Mother's Day: 1908**

Historic St. George's Museum and Archives, May 9

**First Hospital in America: 1751**

Pennsylvania Hospital, May 16

**First World's Fair on American Soil: 1876**

Please Touch Museum, May 23

**First Steamboat for Passengers and Freight: 1787**

Independence Seaport Museum, May 30

**First American Flag: 1777**

Betsy Ross House, June 6

**First U.S. Army: 1775**

Museum of the American Revolution, June 13

**First Annual Reminder Demonstration: 1965**

Philly Pride Visitor Center, June 20

**First Paper Maker in America: 1690**

Rittenhouse Town, June 27

**First Bank of the United States: 1791**

First Bank of the United States, July 4

**First Organized Baseball Team: 1831**

Location TBD, July 11

**First Ice Cream Soda: October 1874**

Franklin Fountain, July 18

**First American Art School and Museum: 1805**

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, July 25

**First Scientific Society of Natural History: 1812**

Academy of Natural Sciences, Aug. 1

**First Zoo in America: 1874**

Philadelphia Zoo, Aug. 8

**First U.S. Mint: 1793**

Location TBD, Aug. 15

**First Selfie: 1839**

LOVE Park, Aug. 22

**First Slinky: 1945**

Philadelphia Art Museum, Aug. 29



Statues of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington outside the Masonic Temple are prepared for lots of selfies over the next year.  
Jose F. Moreno / Staff Photographer

### **First Signing of the Constitution: 1787**

National Constitution Center, Sept. 5

### **First Continental Congress: 1774**

Carpenters' Hall, Sept. 12

### **First Naming of the United States: 1776**

Independence Hall, Sept. 19

### **First Ronald McDonald House: 1974**

Ronald McDonald House, Sept. 26

### **First Penitentiary in America: 1829**

Eastern State Penitentiary, Oct. 3

### **First Peoples**

Penn Museum, Oct. 10

### **First U.S. Navy & Marine Corps: 1775**

Arch Street Meeting House, Oct. 17

### **First Public Showing of a Motion Picture: 1870**

Philadelphia Film Society, Oct. 24

### **First Modern Detective Story Written: 1841**

Edgar Allan Poe House, Oct. 31

### **First Thanksgiving Day Parade: 1920**

Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Nov. 7

### **First University in America: 1740**

University of Pennsylvania, Houston Hall, Nov. 14

### **First Children's Hospital in America: 1855**

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Main Building, Nov. 21



Carpenter's Hall in Independence National Historical Park will host a 52 Weeks of Firsts event on Sept. 12 to commemorate the first Continental Congress in 1774.  
Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer



Independence National Historical Park staff members perform weapons training on flintlock muskets in preparation for 2026 celebrations.  
Jose F. Moreno / Staff Photographer

### **First Pencil with Attached Eraser: 1858**

National Liberty Museum, Nov. 28

### **First Weather Bureau: 1870**

Franklin Institute, Dec. 5

### **First Electronic Computer: 1945**

University of Pennsylvania, Dec. 12

### **First Public Lending Library in America: 1731**

Library Company of Philadelphia, Dec. 19

### **Philly Food Firsts: First Cheesesteak (1930s) / Water Ice (1932), Bubble Gum (1928)**

Reading Terminal Market, Dec. 26



# PLANTING SEEDS OF HISTORY

**BURPEE PULLED FROM ITS GARDENING ARCHIVES AND SPROUTED SOMETHING NEW TO CELEBRATE 2026 MILESTONES WITH ICONIC INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.**

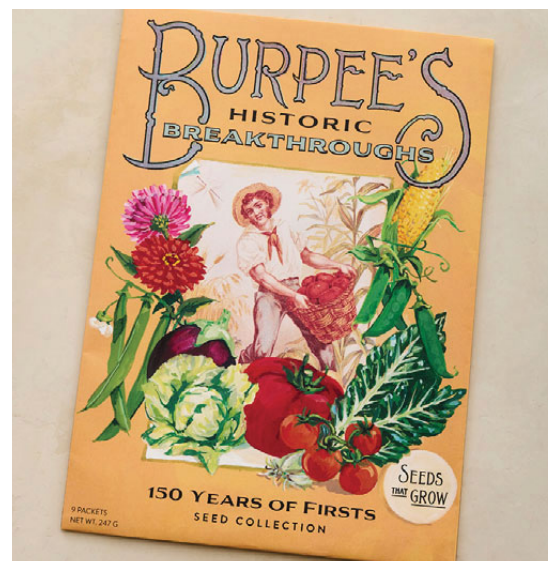
By Liz Grossman  
FOR THE INQUIRER

**T**he morning glory flower can take months to blossom, but seeing their stunning trumpet-shape blooms finally pop from their spindly tendrils is so worth the wait.

“We call the morning glory ‘happiness,’ because it’s cheerful. It’s blue with a glowing pink center, and it makes you feel like life is good,” said Burpee president and CEO Jamie Mattikow.

To celebrate the nation’s 250th birthday, the Warminster company is partnering with the Museum of the American Revolution to offer a Declaration Bouquet collection, which features seeds for five new flowers inspired by words plucked from the Declaration of Independence and the national anthem.

The collection debuted Dec. 1, and, besides the “happiness” morning glory, includes a “star-spangled” marigold, whose white layered petals signify Old Glory’s stars; the drought-tolerant, butter yellow “independence” gaillardia; the fiery orange “liberty” cosmos; and the calming purple “freedom” verbena that can be started indoors or out, as long as it has full sun.



Burpee's Historical Breakthroughs seed collection celebrates the company's 150th anniversary. Courtesy of Jason Varney

## A SPECIAL TREAT FOR GARDENERS

“We wanted to bring the words to life in a flower that embodied them,” Mattikow said of the full collection, which is available in the museum’s gift shop and via burpee.com for \$34.95 (you can also get each Declaration Bouquet seed packet individually via Burpee, as well). The collection contains five seed packets, eight labels, a Declaration of Independence keepsake card, and growing instructions.

“The Declaration Bouquet was part of a larger effort of making America’s 250th special for gardeners,” said

Mattikow, who became an avid gardener himself after he joined the company in 2019.

The idea to partner with the Museum of the American Revolution came from Maureen Heffernan, horticulturist and wife of Burpee owner George Bell, after a visit to the Old City institution.

“They were percolating this idea of collaborations for 2026, so she reached out,” said Allegra Burnette, the museum’s chief strategy and growth officer.

They talked through ideas, and the company came up with the flower collection.

“It’s a way for them to showcase new flowers — and the Declaration of Independence spawned a lot of new things, as well,” Burnette said. “It’s also a nice way to come out of our ‘Declaration’s Journey’ exhibit when you are in a thoughtful but celebratory frame of mind. We hope it’s a way to plant a seed and keep something going forward.”

The collaboration was a no-brainer for Burpee. “We recognize the importance of Philadelphia to the birth of the country, and we wanted to partner with somebody who could help us think of a great way to do this,” Mattikow said.

## ANOTHER MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

Along with celebrating the nation’s milestone birthday, Burpee has a big one of its own, marking 150 years in business in 2026. One way it’s ringing in the anniversary is with a Historic Breakthroughs collection of heirloom seeds.

“The founding of W. Atlee Burpee has always been about innovation, even today,” Mattikow said. “[Our story] has been largely told in products that were firsts to gardeners and farmers at the time. There are histories behind them that some people aren’t aware of, so we thought it’d be a wonderful opportunity to bundle it together in a collection of historic gardening firsts.”

The Historic Breakthroughs collection includes nine seed packets and is priced at \$29.95, available through Burpee’s website and catalog. This includes iceberg lettuce (first bred in 1894), the first yellow sweet corn (1902), and snowbird sugar snap peas (1978). The collection’s packaging features a nostalgic recreation of a Burpee catalog cover from 1888.

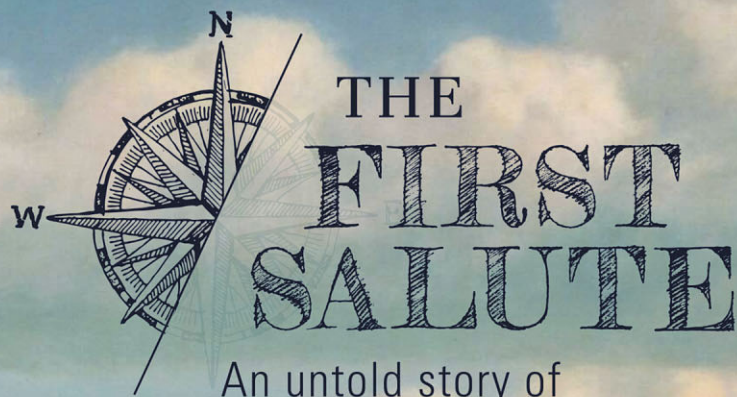
In addition to the Declaration Bouquet, Burpee also launched three other heirloom seed collections for 2026 that tell stories from the iconic gardens of the Monticello Museum, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, and the American Horticultural Society. Each collection contains eight packets of seeds and is available at the respective institutions, as well as via burpee.com for \$49.95.

“Over the years there’s been a lot of choiceful introduction of products that would succeed in the climates of the U.S.,” said Mattikow. “They’re wonderful if you want a little slice of history from a gardener’s standpoint.”

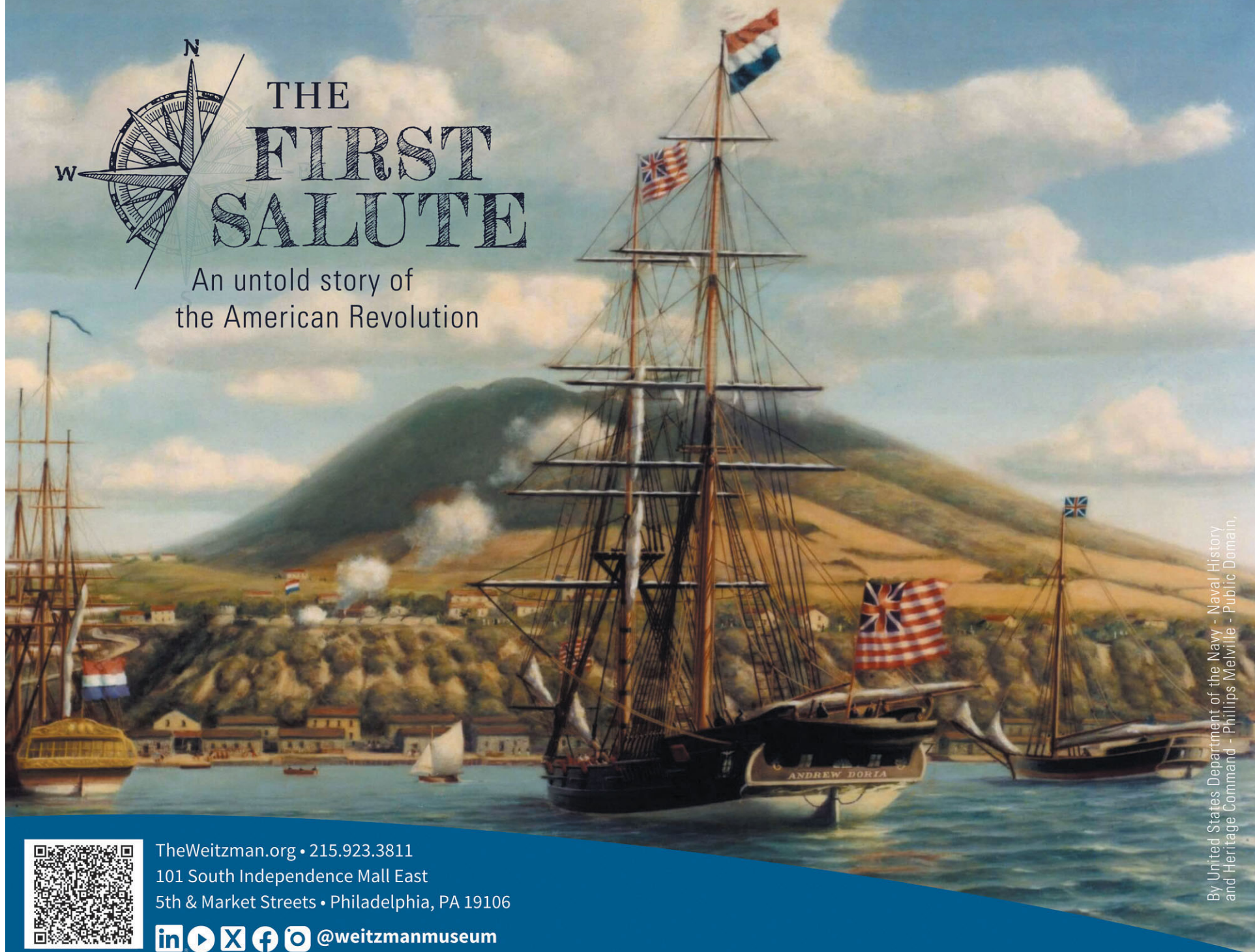


“Happiness” morning glories were bred for Burpee’s Declaration Bouquet in celebration of the nation’s 250th anniversary. Courtesy of Rob Cardillo

# Exhibition Opens April 2026 Only at The Weitzman



An untold story of  
the American Revolution



By United States Department of the Navy - Naval History  
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TheWeitzman.org • 215.923.3811  
101 South Independence Mall East  
5th & Market Streets • Philadelphia, PA 19106

 @weitzmanmuseum

Made possible with Financial Assistance provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Honorable Josh Shapiro, Governor; support from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative; and The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Full list of funders on [TheWeitzman.org/FirstSalute](https://TheWeitzman.org/FirstSalute).

 WEITZMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF  
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY