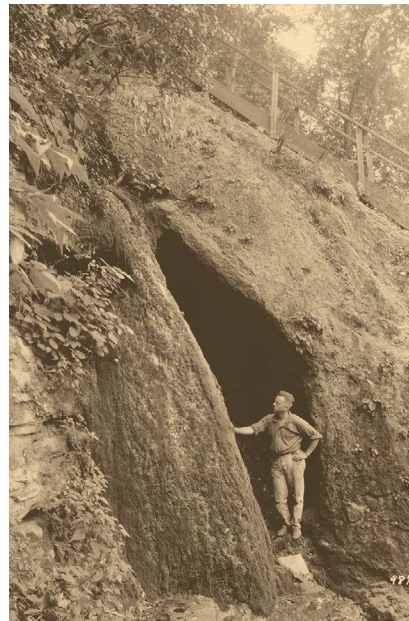


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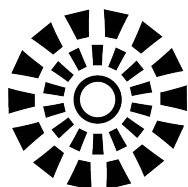
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★ KENTUCKY ★

FIELD GUIDE



history.ky.gov/america250ky



**KENTUCKY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



COMMEMORATING AMERICA250KY FIELD GUIDE

The United States of America is celebrating a big birthday in 2026: #250! If you're reading this guide, you may be wondering how America250 came to be, who can participate, how long it will last, and how Kentucky is involved in the commemoration. This America250KY Field Guide will help you and your community understand what America250 is about and how to plan, celebrate, and commemorate the 250th birthday of the United States in your local community.

WHAT IS AMERICA250?

America250 is a nationwide commemoration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the creation of the United States of America on July 4, 1776. The national commemoration is on July 4, 2026, but honorary and celebratory events are already taking place nationwide.

America250's mission is to inspire and strengthen democracy in America by uplifting diverse stories, fostering community service, and demonstrating the durability of America.

WHAT IS AMERICA250KY?

America250KY is the commemoration of 250 years of American history through a Kentucky lens. The Kentucky General Assembly established the Kentucky Sestercentennial Commission (America250KY) in

2021 (KRS 148.587). The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) administers this commission for the Commonwealth. KHS and partners across the Commonwealth are commemorating Kentucky's history from the nation's founding to today. Because we are highlighting 250 years of Kentucky history up to the present, your community does not need to have a connection to the Revolutionary War to participate in America250KY. We're celebrating all periods of our state and local history.





This commemoration recognizes the people, places, and events that created our shared history. It will examine Kentucky's role in shaping the United States and how our country's ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice have evolved since 1776.

Through educational programs, statewide events, and other activities, we celebrate our history while considering what it means to be a Kentuckian. Known as the original western frontier, Kentucky has always been a crossroads for the country. Our Commonwealth has continually produced influential leaders, social movements, and cultural touchstones for the nation. This commemoration will highlight our achievements while embracing our shared responsibilities and roles as citizens of the United States.

By exploring state and local history during the 250th, we recognize how our past—and the ideals of the American Revolution—help us understand who we are today.

THEMES & OBJECTIVES

To commemorate 250 years of history, America250KY is guided by several themes and objectives that provide a cohesive framework for programs and events across the Commonwealth.

THEMES

Revolutionary Experiment

Our founders did not have all the answers. They knew America was a revolutionary experiment and expected future generations to improve upon their work. The three revisions of Kentucky's constitution exemplify this effort, as individuals fought for their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This history is full of both progress and challenges; the theme prompts reflection on Kentucky's and the nation's founding ideals, while encouraging discussions about democracy and civic institutions.

Programming for this theme could include:

- *How have Kentucky's four constitutions changed over the years as a variety of voices are heard?*
- *Reflect on the progress and challenges experienced in Kentucky's history within your community. When did these events occur?*
- *How have the perspectives of different people or groups changed the discourse of democracy where you live?*
- *How might different perspectives or experiences change the process of becoming "a more perfect union"?*

We The People

Since the settlement of Kentucky lands by Native groups, what it means to be a Kentuckian has changed. The definition and process of citizenship has altered drastically over the past 250 years, in both Kentucky and the United States. Today, Kentucky is home to a diverse population from various backgrounds.

Programming for this theme could include:



- *What are a citizen's roles and responsibilities in your community?*
- *How can you become an active citizen in your community?*

Power of Place

Our environment—both natural and built—shapes our identity. Over the past 250 years, our environment and populace has changed. Today, across the regions of Kentucky, how people identify with the Commonwealth varies. Although our experiences and perspectives vary by region, we all share a common history. This shared history allows us to draw similarities between different places, helping us better understand the past and present.

Programming for this theme encourages audiences to reflect on:

- *How has your community, place, or environment changed over time? What were the internal and external factors in these changes? Who was affected by these changes?*
- *How has the natural environment in your area shaped our history in terms of economic development? How has this affected your community's identity and the environment today?*

- *What places have been preserved in your community due to their historic value? What other sites can you identify that should be preserved or reinterpreted?*

Crossroads in History

Since 1776, Kentucky has stood at the crossroads of multiple historic movements, from westward expansion, the Civil War, the Trail of Tears, the Underground Railroad, the Great Migration, and more. Moreover, Kentucky's political and cultural output has expanded far beyond the state, influencing our nation's history and broader social trends.

Programming for this theme encourages audiences to reflect:

- *How have members of your community, past and present, impacted others both in and outside of your community?*
- *What local events have impacted state or national history?*

Doing History

By examining state and local history during the 250th, Kentuckians can use the past to understand our roles and responsibilities within our communities. To accomplish this, Kentuckians can visit museums and historic sites and discuss why history is important today. By engaging with history, we become





better informed citizens who understand where America has been and where it's going.

Programming for this theme encourages audiences to reflect:

- *What historic sites and events exist or have existed in your community? How have they impacted the community?*
- *Are there any sites that have not been identified or received adequate attention?*
- *What is your role in your community and how can you get involved in local history?*
- *How can you educate others about local history in your community?*

OBJECTIVES

There are four objectives that provide inspiration for programs and activities for the America250KY commemoration:

Heritage Tourism

Encourage fellow Kentuckians to visit unexplored areas of the Commonwealth! Also enhance Kentucky's tourism industry by drawing visitors from outside the state to patronize local museums, historic sites, and historic organizations.

Education

Increase awareness and knowledge of Kentucky history and the people of the past and present through new materials, lesson plans, exhibits, public programs, and digital and tangible resources.

Signature Events

Local and statewide events will raise awareness and enthusiasm for America's 250th. Events can include speaker series, dedication ceremonies, themed programming, and other activities aligned with America250KY.

Legacy Projects

Our history, both local and national, affects every aspect of how we live today. Through the 250th, we will preserve our history, learn from it, and pass it on for future generations to foster unity and celebrate Kentucky's unique identity.

QUICK STATS

WHO: Everyone is celebrating and commemorating! Local communities, families, heritage groups, museums, historic sites, educators, and more.

WHAT: Celebrating and commemorating 250 years of American & Kentucky history since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

WHEN: Now until July 4, 2026.





WHERE: Across Kentucky; final celebratory events occurring statewide on July 4, 2026.

WHY: To learn from the people, places, and events of the past and present to prepare and engage future generations.

GETTING STARTED

With background information on America250KY, the planning process can begin. But where to start?

Step 1: Become an America250KY Community!

For more information on community resources, or how you can apply to become an official America250KY Community, scan the QR codes or click the hyperlinks below:



Scan the QR Code
OR CLICK HERE
For AASLH "Forming a
Local 250th Commission"



Scan the QR Code
OR CLICK HERE
For Official America250KY
Community Resources

Step 2: Planning

Now that you have formed an official America250KY Community, what are your next steps? Think about how your local community wants to commemorate America250KY. What are the needs to be met in your community? How many America250KY themes does your community want to explore? Which objectives align with your goals? What research, if any, needs to be done to inform the community about local history? What events and/or projects will be planned? What local history or local tourism organizations can you partner with?

To ensure you're making timely progress, pick some goals and objectives to help you decide what the desired end result of the commemoration should be. What partners should help you celebrate the 250th? Is there a particular history you would like to recognize? Is there a person, event, or location that has not received due recognition? With your America250KY Community, write down a plan, including what steps need to be completed each month and who oversees those activities.

Hint: Consider applying to the America250KY Grant Program to help with programming and events!

Step 3: Implementation

Put your organized plan into action — and be sure to share the work you're doing with everyone! Use social media to post on your local library's page or local historical society's page with permission. You can also create an America250KY social media page specifically for your America250KY Community (*remember to follow the official America250KY Facebook page!*).

Share your work on a larger scale, too! Submit your event as an officially recognized



America250KY event on the Kentucky Historical Society's America250KY Programming and Events page where your event will be added to the statewide events calendar.

To find out more, scan or click below:



Scan the QR Code
OR CLICK HERE
For Statewide Events
& Programs Calendar

Finally, don't be afraid to ask for help. America250KY at the Kentucky Historical Society is here to help you have a successful and fun commemoration of America's 250th birthday.

NEED INSPIRATION?

Try these event & programming ideas!

- *Essay/oral history contest*
- *Local walking/driving tour*
- *Lecture series*
- *Local field trips to historic sites*
- *History exhibits, new or refreshed*
- *Partner with a local scout group for a history project*
- *Collecting oral histories*
- *Interpretive signs*
- *Digital history projects*
- *Host a National History Day showcase*
- *Themed activity books*

- *Archives/behind the scenes tours*
- *History scavenger hunt*
- *Photo contest*
- *Citizenship ceremonies*
- *Trivia night*
- *Book clubs/talks*
- *Story times*
- *Historical craft demonstration*
- *Living history event*

Beyond America250KY

America250KY aims to not only celebrate and commemorate 250 years of American and Kentucky history, but to use the 250th to ensure the sustainability of Kentucky's museums and historic sites. Many local historical societies and museums were founded during the United States Bicentennial in 1976. The Kentucky Historical Society's own Kentucky Oral History Commission was a product of the bicentennial.

Local museums and historic sites are places to reflect, learn, and grow to serve your community. They are places of empowerment for Kentuckians to demonstrate the relevance of local history and Kentucky history to our everyday lives.

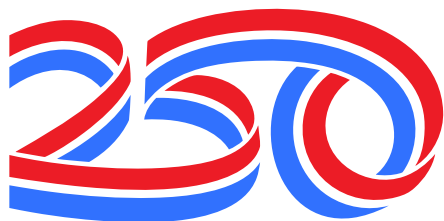
How can you ensure your local museums and historic organizations will prosper for another 50 years for the 300th anniversary? What resources can be provided to sustain them for another 250 years?





FOR MORE INFORMATION:

AMERICA



National Commemoration:

<https://america250.org>



Scan the QR Code

OR CLICK HERE

For America250

AMERICA



Kentucky's Commemoration:

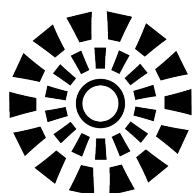
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