



*Celebrating 250 Years
of American Independence*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF OHIO



Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial

- **Doug Preisse**, Van Meter-Ashbrook & Associates (Commission co-chair)
- **Michael B. Coleman**, IceMiller LLP (Commission co-chair)
- **State Sen. Hearcel Craig**, Ohio Senate
- **Christy Davis**, immediate past president of the Ohio Local History Alliance/Canton Museum of Art curator of exhibitions
- **Kathryn Dean-Dielman**, Lorain County Historical Society board president
- **Kelly Falcone Hall**, Western Reserve Historical Society executive director
- **John Fleming**, museum professional
- **Steve Hambley**, Medina County Commissioner
- **Thomas Hankins**, Hocking Valley Chapter president of the Sons of the American Revolution/Friends of Fort Laurens
- **Nancy Hollister**, former governor, lieutenant governor, legislator
- **State Rep. Adam Holmes**, Ohio House of Representatives
- **Melinda Huntley**, Ohio Travel Association executive director
- **Vincent Keeran**, Ohio Senate Clerk
- **Sharon Kennedy**, Ohio Supreme Court chief justice
- **Megan Kvamme**, Muskingum County entrepreneur
- **State Sen. George Lang**, Ohio Senate
- **Adam Levine**, Toledo Museum of Art executive director
- **Matt MacLaren**, TourismOhio chief
- **Glenn Miller**, County Commissioners' Association of Ohio president
- **State Rep. Joe Miller**, Ohio House of Representatives
- **Charley Moses**, Ohio History Connection board president
- **Kimberly Murnieks**, Office of Budget and Management director
- **Paul Oyaski**, former mayor of Euclid, Cuyahoga County development department
- **Elizabeth Pierce**, Cincinnati Museum Center executive director
- **Sharetta Smith**, mayor of Lima
- **Ted Strickland**, former governor, member of Congress
- **Samantha Turner**, Youngstown city council member
- **Ginger Warner**, Ohio Arts Council board chair
- **Mackensie Wittmer**, National Aviation Heritage Area (Dayton) executive director
- **Megan Wood**, executive director of the Ohio History Connection (*Ex-Officio*/Commission secretary)

CONTENTS

Ohio Commission for the Semiquincentennial.....	1
Letter from Co-Chairs Michael B. Coleman & Douglas J. Preisse	2
Letter from Executive Director Todd Kleismit	3
Celebrations & Signature Events Impacting Tourism & Economic Development	4
Ohio Originals Highlighting Points of Pride & Unity	7
Engaging Youth and Lifelong Learners Education & Scholarship	14
Inclusive Statewide Engagement Museums, Arts & Culture	18
Telling Ohio Stories Partnerships & Funding Opportunities	22
Acknowledgements.....	27
Final Thoughts Moving Ahead.....	28

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LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Dear Governor DeWine, Senate President Huffman, House Speaker Stephens and Fellow Ohioans:

In less than four years, the United States of America will mark its 250th anniversary of Independence. As Americans, we've experienced a lot of history in that quarter-of-a-millennium. We started with little except a powerful new idea – that people should pursue happiness and that they should enjoy life, liberty and govern themselves through a democracy and not under a king. America from the start was not perfect, and we recognize it is not perfect today. But it has changed and it has changed the world. We see the coming celebration in 2026 as a good time to share our stories – happy and unhappy ones, ones that we can all feel good about and ones that trouble us and complicate our national story. We hope the whole of America 250, and our part of it here in Ohio, will be an occasion of national unity and respect.



Michael B. Coleman and Douglas J. Preisse
Co-Chairs

Such an event demands many activities. With this report, citizens – all volunteers – have come together to lay out ideas that may rise to be part of our Ohio program to honor America. We have strived to embody the notion that in each activity or project – there should be both a sense of celebration and commemoration and a blend of education and fun. We want people to learn about our past and our present and to think about our shared future. We also want people to have fun.

It is not possible, at this juncture, to estimate the cost of any particular endeavor nor are any of the ideas here intended to be overly prescriptive. This is a catalogue of ideas, appropriate ones, we think, for our mission. Later, we are certain, other excellent ideas will arise. That is to be expected. As citizens and Ohio's leaders set priorities, careful plans will be undertaken for their successful execution and a realistic plan for accomplishing them formulated. We imagine a sparkling, meaningful celebration of America 250 will require – and warrant – a robust blend of public financial support and private philanthropy.

We are both highly honored to serve, together, as co-chairs of America 250 in Ohio. It is a privilege and a duty we have been excited to take up.

Thank you for the opportunity to imagine what America's coming celebration can be like here in our home state of Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MBColeman".

Michael B. Coleman, Co-Chair
Ohio Commission for the
U.S. Semiquincentennial

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug Preisse".

Douglas J. Preisse, Co-Chair
Ohio Commission for the
U.S. Semiquincentennial

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Governor DeWine, Senate President Huffman, House Speaker Stephens and Ohioans everywhere:

Ohio may not have been one of the original 13 British colonies. Nor was Ohio one of the next three states carved out of those original colonies. In many ways, Ohio is an American original. It sprang first among those states created whole cloth from the young nation's Northwest Territory of 1787, not long after the American Revolution. As we near the nation's 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026, it is an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the past, take stock of the present and lay the groundwork for an even better future.

We launched our new state commission on Ohio's Statehood Day, March 1, this year. Our responsibilities, which include producing this report, are described in Section 149.309 of the Ohio Revised Code. I am proud of our early work to engage many Ohioans, organizations and communities to inspire participation. We want America 250-Ohio to be loud, colorful, bold, accessible and inclusive. Alongside our national partners, we are working to make this celebration the most inclusive anniversary in the nation's history. That means all 88 counties. All ages, races, religions, political affiliations and sexual orientations. We need all citizens who want to be engaged in meaningful ways to join us!

We started our work by creating several large, inclusive committees:

- Celebration and Signature Events
- 88-County Public Engagement
- K-12 Education
- Scholarship
- Commemoration
- Travel, Tourism & Economic Development
- Museums, Arts Organizations & Cultural Institutions
- Communications, PR & Marketing
- Philanthropic Partners
- Showcasing

While our committees were working on many of the recommendations you will find in this report, I hosted 12 regional "listening sessions" where I introduced the work of America 250-Ohio in every region of the state, working with local partners. These listening sessions were held in every Ohio region:

- Marietta • Cincinnati (2) • Toledo • Steubenville • Columbus • Dayton • Lancaster
- Cleveland (2) • Lima • Canton

I am pleased with the report that follows on these pages. I was delighted to learn about how many of the ideas from one area of Ohio often resonated with people and organizations elsewhere. During these divisive times, America 250-Ohio will provide some loud, colorful, bold, accessible and inclusive ways to remind Ohioans of what brings Americans together. That is my greatest hope and aspiration for this, our nation's 250th anniversary. I am confident you, too, will find inspiration to work alongside our Commission and so many others on this journey toward 2026.

Finally, I wish to thank Governor DeWine and the members of the Ohio General Assembly for supporting this important work. Please be sure to call upon the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial with your questions and ideas. This can only be a once-in-a-generation opportunity if we take full advantage of it.

Sincerely,



Todd Kleismit, Executive Director

Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial



Todd Kleismit
Executive Director

CELEBRATIONS & SIGNATURE EVENTS

Impacting Tourism & Economic Development

Celebrating Ohio's numerous contributions to America and Americans calls for some noisemaking and some statewide signature events. The state that sent numerous men and women to shape history – on the earth as well orbiting above it – has much to celebrate. Let's be loud, colorful and bring some Ohio swag to the party! Ohio's stories are often reflections of national stories. The tourism assets in our local communities are as rich and diverse as the organizations charged with showcasing them to visitors and Ohioans alike. Here are examples of how America 250-Ohio should capitalize on signature events leading up to 2026:

Aviation The celebration of America 250 in Ohio demands an event or a compelling activity to underscore Ohio's prowess in aviation and aerospace. This may showcase Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (with its stellar National Museum of the United States Air Force) and the rich constellation of nearby aviation attractions. These include Huffman Prairie Flying Field – where the Wright Brothers developed their ideas for heavier-than-air craft – and the several related sites included in the National Park Service's Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. At Carillon Historical Park, the Wright Brothers' 1905 Flyer, which they considered the first true airplane, is displayed as a National Historic Landmark. Such an event should illuminate the international importance of Ohio's NASA Glenn Research Center and involve Ohio's several superb science museums.

A Great Lake Ohioans are fortunate to call Lake Erie their own great lake and it should play its part in celebrations in 2026. It is likely that America 250 will see a national signature event focused on tall, ocean going sailing ships – an iconic remembrance of the nation's bicentennial in 1976. While this will almost certainly include East Coast and Gulf of Mexico venues, Great Lakes ports of call should be featured as well (not all but many such majestic vessels can enter Great Lakes waters via the St. Lawrence Seaway). This can provide Ohio's north coast with the opportunity to host Tall Ship Festivals in Cleveland, Toledo, Put-in-Bay and other Lake Erie ports of call. The Lake Erie tourism infrastructure has much to offer with museums and historical sites like the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, the 200-year-old Marblehead Lighthouse, the 352-foot tall Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial and much more.

Ohio River The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 made the Ohio River the dividing line between slavery and freedom. It had been a source of veneration by indigenous people for thousands of years. The River's importance as a major interstate highway for boats and ships in post-Revolutionary War America only grew once Ohio became the nation's 17th state in 1803. The Ohio River today is still an important commercial waterway and home to an abundance of heavy industry and tourism assets along its shores. A diverse amalgam of major league sports, museums like the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Ohio River Museum, Smale Park in Cincinnati, and





annual events such as the Ohio Sternwheeler Festival offer star-spangled settings for America 250 signature events. It is also possible for Ohio to spearhead a regional/multi-state effort to feature showy sternwheelers set on the waters of the Ohio River.

Cars Alongside Michigan, Ohio's history of importance to the automobile industry is preeminent. Ohioans love cars, and always have. America 250 in Ohio should have a focus on cars and car history. Once known as a center for the production of wagons and carriages, Ohio's economy transformed to become an international leader in the production of automobiles and all the scientific advances that moved cars from being simply constructed novelties to an era when their vast variety would feature all sorts of consumer-driven add-ons. Many early car companies began in Ohio like Packard that started in Warren. Charles Kettering's workshops in Dayton – producing inventions like the electric self-starter and car air-conditioning – moved the automobile from a basic machine supplying transportation to an indispensable feature of American life and style. Helping advance the age of the automobile was the invention of the traffic light by Ohioan Garret Morgan, an African American Clevelander. There are many museums in Ohio that tell the story of this history. One internationally recognized collection is the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum at the Cleveland History Center. Some Ohio roadways also offer a rich history about America. The story of the National Road (going back to the nation's early days, it was transformed into a modern automobile-centric

highway during the 1920s) is a fascinating one and so too is the Lincoln Highway, U.S. Rt. 30, that crosses northern Ohio. The 3-C Highway predates most of Ohio's modern roadway system. An Ohio road-trip – or caravan – made up of historic vehicles from different eras and traversing the state in one or more routes during 2026 would draw the nation's attention to Ohio's automobile legacy.

Ohio Open Doors The Ohio History Connection created the Ohio Open Doors program in 2016 on an every-other-year (biennial) cycle. Hundreds of organizations have signed on to host special free event(s) during a 10-day window in September in even-numbered years. This statewide event where landmark building owners and operators “open their doors” to the public for special tours and programs has proven to be popular and growing. More than 200 organizations statewide offered unique programs for the 2022 Ohio Open Doors, held from September 9-18, with partnerships with the Ohio Arts Council, TourismOhio, the Ohio Travel Association and Heritage Ohio. No other state is currently hosting such a statewide event and 2026 – during the nation's 250th anniversary – has the potential for major impact and national attention. Momentum should be gained in 2024 with further geographic and thematic diversity.

Sports Ohio is home to several major league sports teams and, of course, the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. Baseball and football both have their roots right here in the Buckeye State. Speaking of the Buckeyes,



What is the national approach to America250?

America250 is a multi-year effort to commemorate the semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary, of the United States. This effort is led by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission – created by Congress – and its America250 Foundation, which the Commission established to support its work. Together, their purpose is to catalyze a more perfect union by designing and leading the most comprehensive and inclusive celebration in our country's history. America250 represents a coalition of public and private partners all working to create initiatives and programs that honor our first 250 years and inspire Americans to imagine our next 250. The commemoration period began in 2020, culminates on July 4, 2026, and officially concludes in 2027.

America250's efforts focus on three themes: celebrating the diversity of American life and our common humanity; deepening our understanding of American history to strive towards our highest ideals; and inspiring a new movement of civic engagement to build our united future. The America250 Commission is led by Chairwoman Rosie Rios, former secretary of the U.S. Treasury. You can learn more by visiting online at america250.org.



The Ohio State University's football program is consistently one of the best teams in the nation and one of the most valuable sports programs in all of college. Ohio sports legends and idols such as LeBron James, Jack Nicklaus, Jim Brown, Cy Young, Woody Hayes, Stephanie Hightower and now Joe Burrow. Ohio's sports teams, and the Football Hall of Fame, should help Ohio promote athletics as part of the nation's anniversary, wear commemorative patches for America 250 and consider Ohio-related special events similar to the "Field of Dreams" baseball game now played annually in Iowa. There is a major opportunity to involve junior high and high school athletics as a means of getting youth interested and engaged in the celebration.

U.S. Route 250 Built mostly during the 1920s, U.S. Route 250 is a 514-mile stretch of highway connecting Richmond, Virginia to Sandusky, Ohio. It is only natural to capitalize on the appropriately named "U.S. Route 250" during America 250. Fortunately, U.S. Rt. 250 is scenic in places and happens to connect highly relevant places of historical significance, just in Ohio. Starting from Sandusky, U.S. Route 250 moves southeasterly through nine counties, connecting Lake Erie to the Ohio River where it then makes its way through West Virginia and Virginia to the Atlantic coast. In Ohio, U.S. Rt. 250 connects an array of history-related places from Cedar Point to the Ohio Turnpike, then Milan (birthplace of Thomas Edison), Norwalk, Ashland, Wooster, Dover, New Philadelphia, Cadiz (birthplace of Clark Gable) and Martins Ferry. Partnership opportunities exist with transportation organizations, local historical societies, cities and even the states of West Virginia and Virginia where so much Revolutionary American history can be found.

OHIO ORIGINALS

Highlighting Points of Pride & Unity

America 250 provides an excellent opportunity to distinguish Ohio and its contributions to American history. Ohio has long been a microcosm of the broader United States, a bellwether not only of changing political perspectives, but representative of middle America generally. Ohio once billed itself as the “Heart of it all,” a popular slogan that resonated with many and just seemed to fit the shape of our state and the sentiment of its “Ohio Nice” residents. America 250-Ohio should be a little noisier these next few years. Let’s be more colorful and tap into that Ohio pride. Here are several ways we can highlight points of Buckeye pride and some Ohio originals:

Fort Laurens Ohio has only a handful of ways to directly tie its history to that of the American Revolution. Ohio’s closest link may be Fort Laurens in Tuscarawas County. Fort Laurens, named after then-Continental Congress President Henry Laurens, is where the only significant military engagement between Americans seeking independence and their British and American Indian opponents occurred in what is now Ohio. Fort Laurens is both an historical place and the setting for an historical event. It is also the resting place for several unknown American soldiers. Fort Laurens warrants special attention during America 250. The Fort was constructed not in 1776 – the year the United States declared its independence – but in 1778. Between now and 2028, Ohioans should rally to engage in a serious program of archaeological study at Fort Laurens so that the siege that defined the historical event can be better understood. This archaeological program can educate visitors and students as discoveries are made and to build momentum for engaging visitors and increase attendance. The improvements and the potential fort restoration program should spring from the findings of the archaeological program (similar initiatives have

been undertaken in Virginia and elsewhere). Following that, a combination of state operating and capital support and grants will be necessary to augment existing funds. The Ohio History Connection, which manages the 30-acre property, is engaging with community leaders and other local groups to plan a sustainable program to operate and make improvements to the site.

Marietta and the Revolutionary War Period Neither the City of Marietta nor the State of Ohio existed in 1776. Nevertheless, Marietta’s immediate post-Revolutionary history is steeped in important stories springing from that generation and its connection with the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers. Marietta should be featured as Ohio celebrates America 250. Following the American Revolution, the Continental Congress sold 1.5 million acres of Ohio Country land to a group of Revolutionary War veterans. The first of these, Rufus Putnam, came ashore on April 7, 1788 to found Marietta. George Washington knew many of these veterans and was proud of their efforts saying:

“No colony in America was ever settled under such favorable auspices as that which has just commenced at the Muskingum. ... If I was a young man, just preparing to begin the world, or if advanced in life and had a family to make provision for, I know of no country where I should rather fix my habitation....”

Long before General Putnam and his comrades founded Marietta, Adena and Hopewell Culture American Indians lived there and left earthworks on an enormous scale.





Many portions survive today. Around the Great Mound earthwork a cemetery was established in 1801 where – in the entire United States – the largest number of Revolutionary War officers are buried. Marietta is a lovely town with many streets boasting fine collections of first-rate historical American buildings, commercial and residential. The character of this oldest city in our state is defined by its intimate relationship with the two great rivers that flow together in downtown Marietta. In 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette, hero of the American and French Revolutions, visited Marietta during his tour of the United States. In the decades that followed, crossing the Ohio River was a key milestone as enslaved African Americans sought freedom. At Marietta, abolitionists assisted them along their escape to Canada.

In this one Ohio place, there are many American history stories to be shared. Already there are several programs underway that will complement Ohio's participation in America 250. State capital funds and others sources of support can ensure their completion.

- The Ohio River Museum is set to be revitalized in a new building with vibrant exhibits.
- Campus Martius Museum is being reimagined to tell the story of the enormous importance – and powerful aspirations – of the Northwest Ordinance.
- Start Westward Monument and Muskingum Park combine to form a community landmark that is undergoing restoration and improvements.
- The Judge Joseph Barker, Jr. House, dating from 1832, is a landmark overlooking the Ohio River that is in the early stages of a restoration.

- Ohio Welcoming Center alongside I-77 at Marietta is near completion and can be themed to educate the public about the Northwest Ordinance and the six states that sprang from it (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and, partially, Minnesota).

World Heritage How many Ohioans know they live near some of the world's most significant cultural heritage sites? Ohio is poised to have eight American Indian earthworks added to the World Heritage List designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks nomination, consisting of the Newark Earthworks (Great Circle and Octagon) in Licking County, Fort Ancient in Warren County, and five earthworks within Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County, are expected to be Ohio's first World Heritage site as early as summer of 2023. The World Heritage List includes over 1,100 properties, with only 24 in the United States. Inclusion on the List marks the highest possible international recognition for cultural and natural heritage sites. Current World Heritage sites include Egypt's Giza Pyramids, China's Forbidden City, Peru's Machu Picchu, Great Britain's Stonehenge and America's Grand Canyon. The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks were built roughly 2,000 years ago with astonishing mathematical, astronomical, and engineering precision that aligns many of the earthworks to the cycles of the sun and moon. In the past, these were gathering places that people came to from across two-thirds of North America. Today, World Heritage designation will again draw people to these remarkable sites from near and far. Ohio must prepare

now to welcome visitors by investing in online and real infrastructure that invites the world to these global icons. Several needs still must be addressed, including a comprehensive website to orient visitors with site and tourism information, development of a compelling brand to convey the wonder of these places, a tourism marketing campaign that includes nearby communities, and updated on-site visitor infrastructure that will offer world-class experiences to these cultural wonders.

Ohio's Historic Courthouses Ohio has an astounding collection of historic courthouses, most of which form the heart of many towns' sense of community. They set the tone for the county seats where they stand out as powerful symbols of democracy, unity and of community vitality. Our courthouses should be celebrated and serve as the beautiful historic backdrops for semiquincentennial events in each county. Because many of these gems need urgent repair while some warrant full restoration, Ohio should launch a public-private partnership resulting in a gradual program of restoration of historic courthouses. States like Texas and West Virginia have done just such a thing with success. Likewise, this is achievable for Ohio if done gradually and to a high standard of design and appropriateness. Restorations and repairs (not every courthouse needs full restoration) must be undertaken with professional competence and best architectural and construction practices. Though time is limited, before the nation's 250th anniversary in July 2026, or commensurate with it, the first several restored Ohio courthouses can be unveiled making them highpoints of the celebration. Affordable and practical, using agencies of the state largely already in place, an effort to revitalize Ohio's historic courthouses would leave a valuable and lasting legacy of pride across Ohio that would far outlive this milestone occasion.

250 Sites Ohio boasts 76 state parks. It also has 76 places (or things) designated as National Historic Landmarks. In the Spirit of '76, America 250-Ohio should promote 76 Ohio sites each year (early 2023 through July 2026, resulting in 250 amazing Ohio experiences. This can be done through social media and partner organizations. Using 250 places as a theme would allow Ohio to call out for attention so many of its nationally or internationally significant attractions.

For instance, zoos in Cincinnati, Toledo, Columbus and Cleveland are of worldwide significance. Ohio has an outstanding collection of presidential sites, homes, burial places and museums. Blossom Music Center, between Cleveland and Columbus, is iconic in the sphere of classical music and entertainment. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Adams County's Serpent Mound serve as other stellar Ohio examples.

Ohio State Fair An Ohio State Fair Bicentennial Time Capsule was created during the Ohio State Fair in 1976 and will be opened during the 2026 Fair. The 2022 State Fair commemorated historic anniversaries by unveiling new murals featuring Ohioans Ulysses S. Grant (born in 1822) and Buffalo Soldier Charles Young (died in 1922). Established in 1850, the Ohio State Fair is one of the nation's largest, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, generating tens of millions of dollars. In addition to the placement of a new time capsule, the 2026 Ohio State Fair could feature a temporary exhibit or festival of historic farm implements loaned by the public or from institutions around the state or country. From horse-powered equipment to machines energized by steam or other sources of power, this would be a popular attraction with lots of noise, color and motion. The nearby Ohio Village could be employed as a backdrop. The grounds of the Expositions Commission sport several wood frame buildings from the late 19th or early 20th century. Charming and quaint with their well-preserved architectural features, they might be turned into focal points for such an exhibit displaying the evolution in farm technology (and livestock and crops as well as machinery). What symbols of American independence could be interpreted as butter sculptures? Governor DeWine has challenged the Expositions Commission to become the nation's best State Fair grounds. The anniversary of American Independence culminating in 2026 could be used as an important stepping-stone toward this ambitious goal.

Ohio Film Festival The time has come for Ohio to host its own statewide film festival. Motion pictures are quintessential to American culture and the American "brand" worldwide. While many would think of California as dominant in this realm, Ohio has a strikingly powerful story to tell about its contributions to film. This should not be surprising as Ohio-born Thomas Edison and his staff fashioned the first

Then, Now, and Next: Ohioans Lead in Aviation and Aerospace

At the turn of the 20th century, the world collectively set out to conquer manned flight. In an environment of research and experimentation, Orville and Wilbur Wright from Dayton invented controlled, manned flight in 1903. Only 66 years later, Ohioan Neil Armstrong became the first person to step on the moon. Today, the United States' return to the moon and Mars exploration have direct ties to the State of Ohio. Ohio has been, is, and will continue to be a national leader in the aviation and aerospace industry.

The Wright brothers developed the world's first practical airplane in 1905 at Huffman Prairie Flying Field, preserved today at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Next, the brothers established their Wright Company supplying the US Army with planes and training the world's first pilots. Through World War I, Ohio supplied the only American-built aircraft that made it to Europe during the war. It also saw a shift from airplanes as a mode of observation to a means of deploying weapons. Between



Photo: National Aviation Heritage Area

the World Wars, Ohio manufacturers ushered in the Golden Age of Flight as the aviation industry grew significantly. During World War II, WACO Aircraft Manufacturing produced more cargo and troop gliders than any other company. In the 1940s, American Airlines was founded at Luken Airport in Cincinnati.

In 1962, Ohio's own John Glenn was the first American to orbit the Earth. Determined by coin-flip, Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon as part of the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. Since 1962, Ohio has produced 29 astronauts. Many of these astronauts hold records such as the most spaceflight missions, longest single flight mission, even the first marathon performed in space. In 1986, Judith Resnick became one of the two first women to die in space onboard the Space Shuttle Challenger flight.

Today Ohio is the top supplier for Airbus and Boeing making parts, pieces, and systems for the aviation industry. There are more than 550 aerospace and aviation firms in Ohio, according to JobsOhio. Several Ohio universities are now researching unmanned aircraft systems while Ohio is seventh in the United States for aerospace and defense jobs. Aviation and aerospace remains one of the top 10 industries for Ohio. Ohio is a top-10 state for NASA work and contracts. In fact, a recent NASA economic impact study showed a fiscal year impact of \$2.3 billion to Ohio's economy from NASA's work.

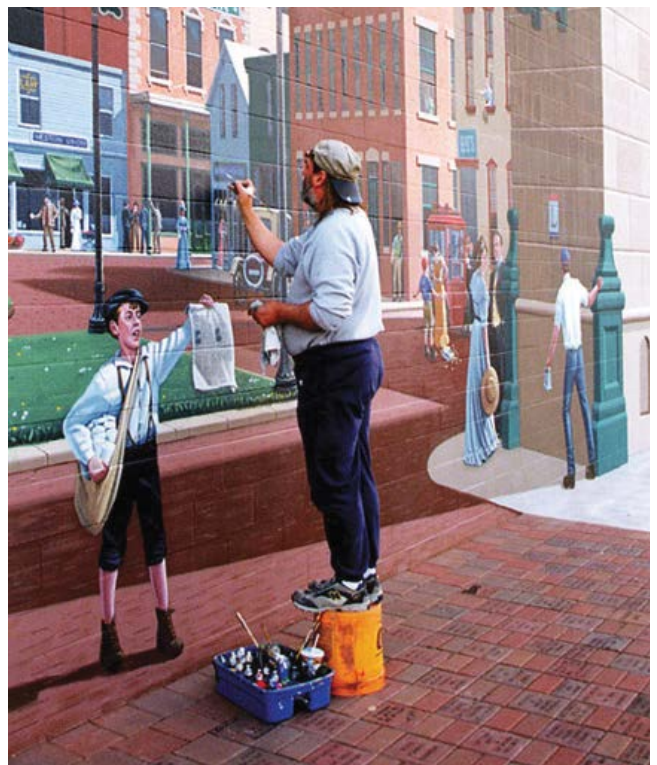
The future of air mobility includes aircraft and unmanned systems that will be part of daily life and part of future warfare. In 2022, Springfield, Ohio broke ground on the National Advanced Air Mobility Center as companies locate in Ohio to research, design, and deploy eVols. NASA has announced the return to the moon through the Artemis program. At least 62 Ohio companies are supplying parts and systems to that effort.

motion-picture camera in 1888. That was the seed for the development of film in the United States. Ohio and Ohioans have excelled ever since, developing its capabilities for the big screen (cinemas) and for the small screen (television and, these days, smart phones). Ohioans have made their fame in front of the camera (think of Ohioans like actors Clark Gable, Halle Berry, Doris Day, Hal Holbrook and Paul Newman) as well as behind the camera (like Cincinnati-born director Steven Spielberg or Youngstown's famed producers the Warner Brothers, or Lorain-born writer Toni Morrison or creative geniuses like Antioch College-educated Rod Serling or film composers like Cleveland's Henry Mancini). Ohioans were at the center of film's Golden Age with so many Ohio communities laying claim to those who made it big in Hollywood (the name of the California city and its industry was provided by Hicksville, Ohio native Daeida Hartell Wilcox Beveridge). Ohio has a stunning array of historic movie palaces, many carefully restored to their original glamor and once more showing film. Ohio today boasts of many distinguished film festivals some associated with a range of genres. There are Ohioans working successfully in film today, in Hollywood and here in our state. A statewide film festival should be a focal point for America 250 in Ohio. Ohio-related film could be presented in dozens of Ohio places, making use of historic theatres and modern venues. Screenings, lectures and exhibits (featuring Ohio movie posters or memorabilia, for instance) could make this a very geographically diverse and textured event. It should encompass a wide range of genres including Hollywood classics, African American cinema, sci-fi, comedy, documentaries, dramas, propaganda (the U.S. Department of State commissioned films – explaining the American way of life to the people of liberated post-war Europe – made in Mount Vernon), industrial and commercial film, educational film, comedies, and animation. Here, Ohio creativity can flourish and Ohio can gain the attention of the world during the course of its, unexpected, but sparkling, statewide film festival.

Homecoming Toolkits Almost everyone, it seems, has direct ties to Ohio. Ohio means home in some way to millions of Americans, even those living elsewhere. America 250 gives Ohio the opportunity to create toolkits to encourage reunions, anniversary events and other special meeting occasions to bring people together – through a shared bond with Ohio. America

250 should partner with organizations like Ohio Humanities, the Ohio Genealogical Society and others to provide speakers, genealogical resources, and historical re-enactors to support this “reunion” or “block party” theme. Messaging appropriate to each individual gathering could be displayed on banners and other commemorative souvenirs recognizing the nation's anniversary.

High Quality Murals Several Ohio communities sport murals that seek to tell stories about their heritage while saying something about their contemporary values. They range considerably in size and quality. Some, like artist Eric Grohe's scenes in downtown Bucyrus, are superb. Portsmouth has successfully employed its flood wall, set against the Ohio River, to illustrate any number of chapters from its history. The best of these take much research and preparation, considerable time and expense to execute. With an eye toward achieving the standard set forth by the best of these community efforts, America 250 in Ohio would be enriched by additional such murals placed strategically around the state.



Ohio Historic Barns/Building Project The Ohio Bicentennial achieved marked success (and built public support and momentum for its aims) with its program of painting its logo on Ohio barns, one in each county. Over the past few years, the Ohio History Connection has employed the barn painter, Scott Hagan, to paint images of important Ohioans, Ohio accomplishments, Ohio cultural themes on Ohio barns. Some of these have included Annie Oakley (Darke County), Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (Ottawa County), the Packard Automobile (Warren County), Shawnee Chief Tecumseh (Greene County) and even the famous Canton Bulldogs vs. Massillon Tigers high school football rivalry (Stark County). OHC is now embarking on an accelerated effort to paint many more of these popular commemorative paintings (no longer limited to barns, which are now scarce). The aim will be to create a “museum of Ohio” across the state with a diverse catalogue of topics and places rendered in a common, recognizable and popular style. An alliance with OHC, Ohio’s America 250 program and local and regional partners may strengthen momentum for the celebration and perfectly complement the commemorative and celebratory tone of the 250th anniversary. This project also may distinguish Ohio from other states.

Ohio’s Historic Markers Since Ohio’s 150th anniversary in the 1950s, local citizens and organizations have been working to install permanent markers to honor (commemorate) important people, events and places. These markers are familiar to Ohioans; they are large brown cast aluminum markers (made in Marietta) with raised gilded lettering. Major anniversaries have seen large surges in demand for markers, occasions like the United States and Ohio Bicentennials (1976 and 2003). This will doubtless happen again as America’s 250th anniversary approaches in 2026 and diverse communities seek to showcase their contributions to Ohio and American history. The Ohio History Connection manages this program and anticipates a vast increase in marker requests at a time when it cannot accept all of the requests it currently receives. The state’s nonprofit history partner currently has one person assigned to the task of vetting and preparing marker applications. This level of staffing must increase, at least temporarily, in proportion to this expected demand. (OHC also administers the Ohio Corporate Limit marker program, the large “shape of Ohio” signs at the entry points of Ohio cities, town and villages).

Liberty Trees The Liberty Tree became a great symbol of the aspirations of the independence movement in America and it can be renewed as a powerful symbol for America 250 in Ohio. The first Liberty Tree was an elm in Boston, Massachusetts. Beneath it was an early protest against the notorious Stamp Act, the start of our quarrel with Britain. Ohio should aim to plant 250 long-living hardwood trees in each county (elms, sadly, are no longer a good choice). Locally led, communities can choose the types of trees to plant and organize commemorative events. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Dawes Arboretum, Holden Arboretum and similar Ohio organizations could partner to accomplish this task in each Ohio county by 2026. The Liberty Tree is not only a symbol and forward-facing gesture... it is also a necessary component of our state’s reforestation program.

Coins and Medals Medals commemorating significant events and people have been issued for more than 2,000 years in Western cultures. During the Revolutionary period, Congress authorized at least a dozen medals to express the nation’s appreciation for major victories and individual heroism. Every celebration of American Independence has leaned into this time-honored tradition, especially the nation’s 1976 Bicentennial. This opportunity lends itself to partnerships with the national America250 Commission and the private sector that could result in the issuance of five medals over a three-year period, beginning in 2024. The Fort Gower Resolves were an early expression of the increasing spirit of American independence, based in modern Ohio, more than 18 months before the Declaration of Independence. A medal related to the Fort Gower Resolves could be issued in 2024 and an Ohio Liberty Tree in 2025. The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial could select three subjects for 2026.





Ohio's Most Revolutionary Place: Fort Laurens

Fort Laurens was constructed by General Lachlan McIntosh and named after Henry Laurens, a close friend and the sitting president of the Continental Congress at the time. It was the only American Continental fort built within the modern-day boundary of the state of Ohio during the Revolutionary War. The Ohio expedition itself was partially planned by General George Washington and was the only military campaign in Ohio that was sanctioned and financed by the Continental Congress. Its construction, along the Tuscarawas River near the "Great Crossing," was intended as a military post to stage attacks on hostile Indian villages, watch the movements of Indian war parties and discourage their attacks on the western settlements, and as a stepping stone for a future attack on Fort Detroit.

Fort Laurens was constructed by regular Continental troops, and Virginia and Pennsylvania militia between November 18 and December 9, 1778. Being a Continental military installation, it was garrisoned (during its existence) by regular Continental troops from the 13th Virginia, 8th Pennsylvania, and later included a small number of troops from the Maryland Corps. During its history Fort Laurens had three commanders; Colonel John Gibson, Major Frederick Vernon, and Lieutenant Colonel Richard Campbell

Throughout most of its existence the Fort Laurens garrison suffered from the extreme cold winter of 1778-1779, a lack of supplies, and constant hostile American Indian attacks. The site of Fort Laurens was a battlefield as well. From February 24 to March 23, 1779, Fort Laurens survived a siege by some 180 American Indians and a few British troops of the Kings 8th Regiment out of Fort Detroit. From the time the march west along the Great Trail began and the eventual evacuation of Fort Laurens, eight separate attacks on American forces tied to this history resulted in 36 American casualties (killed, wounded, and captured). Due to the difficulty to supply the western outpost and a change in western military plans, Fort Laurens was abandoned on August 2, 1779.

Along with many frontier heroes and villains tied to the Fort Laurens history, such as Samuel Brady, William Crawford, and Simon Girty, three U.S. presidents had direct ties to soldiers that helped to build or served in some way at Fort Laurens. Major Richard Taylor (1744-1829) of the 13th Virginia Regiment was the father of our 12th president, Zachary Taylor. Captain Abraham Lincoln (1744-1786), serving in the Rockingham County Militia on the expedition, was the grandfather and namesake of our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, and Private David McKinley (1755-1840), a volunteer in the York County Militia who went west, took part in the campaign, and helped build Fort Laurens, was the great-grandfather of our 25th president, William McKinley.

ENGAGING YOUTH AND LIFELONG LEARNERS

Education & Scholarship

The teaching of history, art, social studies and civics has not fared well in the 21st century as Americans and public policy have looked increasingly toward emphasizing science, technology, engineering, math and standardized tests in classrooms. The long-term erosion of school field trips intensified the challenges of getting our young people interested in and understanding the relevancy of what happened in our past and why. America 250 provides the perfect opportunity to help bring balance to our classrooms and remind all of us how and why connecting our past to the present can lead to a better future. The time is now to sharpen our historical and critical thinking skills emphasized in the study of history and social studies. What better time to examine the period of the nation's founding, renew our dedication to understanding our founding documents and the ways in which we have lived up to the ideals of those documents and in what ways we have not? In the realm of higher education, there has been little scholarly work in the field of Ohio history since the state's bicentennial 20 years ago. Below are some ways that Ohio can breathe new life into historical scholarship while at the same time spark the imaginations of our young people in search for meaning behind America and its upcoming anniversary:

State Historian Several states have an Office of the State Historian and/or Director of Research, something Ohio should consider establishing during America 250. A new position of State Historian/Director of Research could begin during America 250, assisting the work of the Commission and subsequently housed permanently within the Ohio History Connection or another suitable institution engaged in teaching Ohio history. An academic historian (Ph.D) who can serve as a caretaker of Ohio's historical research and support scholars helping tell the stories relating to Ohio and its history would fill this new role. Ideally, the State Historian would help coordinate historical scholarship efforts across the state as well as engage students and young people to help bring history alive for families and Ohioans everywhere. The State of Ohio should be a partner in supporting this work financially as well as programmatically.

National History Day The National History Day (NHD) program began in Cleveland in 1974. NHD is a yearlong academic program focused on historical research and interpretation – not one day. NHD is offered not only in

all 50 states, but has affiliates offering the program in places as far away as South Korea and central America. Students compete regionally with fellow students from other schools to produce papers, websites, exhibits, performances or documentaries. Successful students can advance to the state level and as far as the national competition, earning scholarships along the way. NHD students far outperform their peers across a range of academic fields. Ohio should seize upon NHD in the spirit of America 250 to encourage and incentivize schools and young scholars to participate in NHD by elevating history and social studies in the Ohio curriculum.

Ohio Firsts For educators, identifying Ohio firsts could become a meaningful way to spark the imagination of Ohio students. Consider Ohio's first people (American Indians), Ohio's first court cases, Ohio's first military veterans, Ohio's first freedom seekers (underground railroad), Ohio's first governing documents, Ohio's first educators, Ohio's first art, Ohio's first innovators, Ohio's first athletes. The list could include Ohio Firsts such as the first school for the blind, the first college to admit



women and Black students (Oberlin College), the first to send a man to the moon. The list goes on for Ohio and Ohioans. If adopted, this approach ties in to the state's Model Curriculum standards. America 250-Ohio should work with teachers to create toolkits, professional development opportunities for teachers, project-based learning experiences, and opportunities for activities like field trips and engagement in existing programs like National History Day in Ohio.

Northwest Ordinance America 250-Ohio has the opportunity now to showcase an incredibly important founding document mostly forgotten and little understood – the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Most of the American Midwest was created not from former British colonies, but from the Northwest Territory (former American Indian lands), some of which was negotiated as part of the 1795 Treaty of Greenville. The Northwest Ordinance was a technical document in many respects, defining land boundaries, establishing an orderly process for the creation of future states and emphasizing that new states would be equal to – not subservient to – existing ones. “Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” The Northwest Ordinance made the Ohio River the dividing line between freedom and slavery. Article 3 expressed the spirit of its authors at the time: “The utmost good faith shall always

be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity, shall from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them.” We know Americans did not live up to these sentiments, but 21st century educators and scholars have the opportunity with America 250 to learn from and breathe new life into this overlooked document and its meaning.

Court Cases/Judicial Our judicial branch has been the setting for numerous cases and where prominent Ohioans sometimes shaped our past and present. Ohioans Salmon P. Chase and William Howard Taft served as U.S. Supreme Court chief justices. Ohio-born lawyers like Albion Tourgee (*Plessy v. Ferguson*) and Clarence Darrow (Scopes “Monkey” Trial) are often forgotten, but made landmark impacts. Florence Allen was an important pioneer for women in the judiciary, both nationally and in Ohio. She was one of the first two women to serve on a state supreme court and led a meaningful judicial career stretching from the 1920s to the 1960s. Important Ohio cases throughout history include *Rutherford v. M’Faddon* (1807 case establishing judicial review in Ohio), *Euclid v. Ambler Realty* (1926 case confirming the constitutionality of local zoning)



The Revolution's Final Chapter: Lake Erie

For a thousand years, Lake Erie has played a monumental role influencing the physical, cultural and economic landscape of the region now called Ohio. From reducing and adding to the region's shoreline through erosion and deposition of geologic material to the massive wealth created through the transport and manufacture of raw materials that serve as the critical ingredients of the region's economy, the history of Lake Erie flows through all of Ohio's history.

Lake Erie has long been a route of transport for American Indians, explorers, early settlers, later immigrants and even now vacationers who wish to experience the Buckeye State in all of its majesty. The American Revolution was fought in part so that colonists could access the riches of the Ohio Valley not permitted under English law. One generation after Independence was achieved, Ohioans would join citizens from other states to thwart the English effort to control our frontier culminating in one of the most important naval victories in American history – The Battle of Lake Erie. Perry's victory over the British is the final chapter begun at Concord and Lexington in 1775.

The waters of Lake Erie also helped people to get to Ohio, stay and build one of this continent's most important international economies. In the first half of the 19th century, Ohio's grain, transported across Lake Erie to various canals, helped to feed the young nation. Later in that century, ore from the north crossed Lake Erie to the state's early iron foundries and later steel mills that made possible the Industrial Revolution. It is no surprise that many of Ohio's earliest manufacturing centers were located in close proximity to Lake Erie in towns like Toledo, Lorain, Cleveland and Ashtabula.

Lake Erie is not just a super highway for the transport of goods and raw materials, it is also a place where deeply personal experiences help define who we are as Ohioans. The last stop on the Underground Railroad was the cargo hold of a Lake Erie schooner or steamer giving safe passage to runaway slaves in search of freedom in Canada. The waters of Lake Erie have also been the mechanism for immigrants from across the world to reach the heartland of the continent. The ethnic diversity of much of Ohio is due in large measure to migration patterns made possible by Lake Erie.

This state is named for the river that makes up a large portion of its eastern and southern boundary. But the state's historical development will forever be linked to the body of water that serves as its northern border – Lake Erie.

and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015 case confirming legality of same-sex marriage) are just a few examples of important cases where Ohio played a central role. America 250 provides the opportunity to bring these and other Ohio judicial stories out of obscurity and into educators' toolkits.

Scholarly Research The interpretation of the past continues to evolve thanks to scholarly work from historians and other researchers. This work contributes to our overall understanding of the past, which greatly affects our present and future. As technology increases our access to information, stories that provide additional points of view continue to change the way we think about past events. America 250 provides a new platform for those who are curious, appreciate storytelling and want to reflect on how the past has informed and shaped our present. Ohio's history professors should encourage their masters and doctoral students to build on existing Ohio history scholarship. A new scholarship program could be created with the additional goals of removing potential barriers to

participation by offering financial support and mentorship throughout their time working on the research.

Updating Ohio History Ohio's academic historians should collaborate to create the first of a multi-volume new series about Ohio and its history before the close of 2026. The work surrounding the book series could spur symposia and supplement academic offerings relating to the Revolutionary period while spanning from the earliest human experience in what would become Ohio to modern times. The last comprehensive and in-depth treatment of Ohio was produced a long time ago and there is need for a fresh look. Such a work could also be produced in an online format and would supplement and/or expand current electronic resources like the Ohio History Connection's Ohio History Central. It would be valuable as a guide to Ohio and augment public education as well as the curriculum offered in schools. The full series, realistically, would take several years to complete but the period of America 250 could and should launch this intense effort.

“Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”

— Northwest Ordinance of 1787



INCLUSIVE STATEWIDE ENGAGEMENT

Museums, Arts & Culture

We need all Ohio communities to play a role in America 250. All 88 counties. Civic engagement and the involvement of diverse community organizations in every community are vitally important. America 250 has huge potential to bring people together – and we must make it so! One of Ohio’s greatest strengths is its countless museums, arts organizations, local history groups, genealogical societies and other cultural institutions that can lead the state’s public engagement efforts leading up to the nation’s anniversary. These are examples to engage Ohioans, especially as we strive to make American 250 accessible to everyone and strengthen Ohio’s cultural sector at the same time:

Grants Ohio stands among the first tier of America’s states in the number, variety and importance of its arts and cultural organizations and its museums. These come in all different sizes and are geographically diverse spread across all 88 counties, in all regions, in all metropolitan areas. In 2020, the *New York Times* reported praise for the Cleveland Orchestra, declaring it America’s finest symphony orchestra with world renown. Ohio is rich with zoos, science museums and learning centers, historic house museums, distinguished gardens, natural areas and parks, and conservatories. Moreover, these gems come in all sizes. Many amazing museums and cultural facilities are in small- or medium-size communities like Lima, Mansfield, Marietta, Youngstown and Chillicothe. Four large historical societies (Cincinnati Museum Center, Western Reserve Historical Society, Ohio History Connection and Montgomery County History) operate stellar site systems. Ohio is proud of its presidents (eight altogether) and the amazing collection of sites honoring their legacies. The State of Ohio should invest in the work of America 250 by making the appropriate financial investments, including tiered grant funds for local organizations to carry out statewide and local initiatives. Experience shows that funding important programs early on is the best way to build momentum and ensure sustained success for America 250-Ohio. The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial should collaborate with statewide grant makers – the Ohio History Connection, Ohio Arts Council, Ohio

Humanities and others – to provide grants to nonprofits and local governments ranging from \$500 up to \$500,000 for initiatives aimed at celebrating America and Ohio’s contributions to the national narrative. The Commission’s public/private partnership model gives it the opportunity to combine public dollars with philanthropic support to make the most of this opportunity to invest creatively as we position Ohio to be a true leader in the nation’s upcoming anniversary.

Strengthening the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center Established in the 1980s, the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center (NAAMCC) in Wilberforce honors the stories and contributions of African American history and culture, including a truly world-class collection of important objects. The Museum’s wide-ranging collection of African American art can be found not only in Wilberforce, but on display in major museums including





Ohio Poised for World Heritage Recognition

Many generations before Europeans began arriving in what would become known as the Ohio Valley, the indigenous people who made Ohio home considered this place a sacred ceremonial place for gathering and celebration. The mound building culture better known today as the Hopewell Culture (we don't know what they would have called themselves) were here between about AD 1 and 400 creating monumental ceremonial earthworks that have in recent years been identified as internationally significant.

The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks include the Great Circle Earthworks and Octagon Earthworks in Licking County, the Fort Ancient Earthworks in Warren County, and five earthworks that are included in Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County. All of these sites are either National Historic Landmarks or National Parks, which are the highest honors conferred by the United States on historic properties. Now they are being nominated for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List alongside such sites as the Great Pyramid of Egypt, Stonehenge, and the Great Wall of China.

In order to be eligible for the World Heritage List, sites must have Outstanding Universal Value. One of the criteria for determining if a site possesses Outstanding Universal Value is whether it can be shown to be a masterpiece of human creative genius. Each of the sites comprising the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks are enormous. The ancient Indigenous designers incorporated a sophisticated knowledge of geometry and astronomy into this architecture. The builders also had a keen understanding of the soils needed to construct monuments of earth that could endure for millennia. But what makes the Hopewell earthworks unique is that the societies that built these monumental structures did not live in cities, they did not depend upon agriculture for their livelihoods, and they did not have authoritarian leaders who could command them to build these amazing earthen enclosures.

The Ohio History Connection and Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, along with tribal partners and local stakeholders have been working for many years to recognize the achievements of these remarkable ancestors of contemporary American Indians with this highest of honors for cultural sites. A decision from UNESCO is expected in 2023.

the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture in Washington, D.C. But decades after opening, the NAAMCC deserves Ohio's attention and substantial investments in its physical plant and in its programming capacity. A recent report given to Governor DeWine by supporters of the NAAMCC identifies specific strategies. The stories told in Wilberforce are the stories of America.

Ohio Parks The Buckeye State features what will soon be 76 state parks, administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. A new Great Council State Park is slated to open in the fall of 2023, focused on the indigenous people who made modern-day Ohio their home, especially Tecumseh and the Shawnee. The Greene County site is where a Shawnee village was located in the 1770s. ODNR also oversees 24 state forests, 140 state nature preserves and 150 wildlife areas. Ohio's rich tapestry of parks – national, state and local – are natural places for families to come together and celebrate as a large part of the nation's 250th anniversary.

Statewide Thematic Trails Many stories are best told by visiting multiple places. This also generates additional traveler spending. Connecting the stories and places along important themes through the creation of statewide driving tours is an opportunity for America 250-Ohio. Thematic ideas include trails highlighting transportation, agriculture, filmmaking, aerospace and

aviation, presidents, Civil War, Underground Railroad, music and literature. While some of these efforts are underway, others are yet to be created. Each could be leveraged under an umbrella America 250-Ohio brand with a consistent website, printed materials and marketing efforts. Group itineraries could be developed for the wholesale market, as well as educational objectives to attract student tours. Technology will play an important role as ideas like digital passports, games and QR codes provide additional information to engage people with different learning styles.

American Indian Reburials During the 19th and 20th centuries, archaeologists and museum professionals removed more than 7,200 individual skeletal remains from ancient American Indian sites in Ohio. These remains are currently housed in boxes at a secure Ohio History Connection facility. Acting in response to federal law and a change in its institutional culture, OHC is working with American Indian tribal partners to repatriate these remains with the idea of returning each to the ground so that their dignity and cultural customs will be restored and honored – commensurate with the America 250 spirit of unity. The culturally inappropriate practices of the past can be addressed during the nation's 250th anniversary period in full partnership with tribal representatives. State capital dollars can be employed to prepare a suitable and secure reburial ground in western Ohio.



Ohio Presidents

William Henry Harrison (9th) | Ulysses S. Grant (18th)
Rutherford B. Hayes (19th) | James Garfield (20th)
Benjamin Harrison (23rd) | William McKinley (25th)
William Howard Taft (27th) | Warren G. Harding (29th)



Sons & Daughters of the American Revolution

The National Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) was formed in 1889 and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was formed the following year. Both organizations are lineage-based membership nonprofit organizations whose members are direct descendants of those who served in the American Revolutionary War or contributed to the establishment of United States independence. Both organizations can trace their roots to commemorating the centennial of George Washington's inauguration as the nation's first president in 1789.

The SAR is headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, and has a national membership of about 35,000. The DAR is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has an estimated 185,000 members. Both organizations have significant genealogical resources and perform civic initiatives relating to historic preservation, education and patriotism. The Ohio Society of the SAR includes nearly 2,000 members among its 23 chapters. The Ohio State Society of the DAR includes more than 6,300 women participating in about 100 local Ohio chapters.

Both the SAR and the DAR are actively involved in America 250 at the national and local levels. Learn about the Ohio SAR at www.ohssar.org. Learn more about the Ohio DAR at www.ohiodar.org.

TELLING OHIO STORIES

Partnerships & Funding Opportunities

Ohio has an enormous amount of talent among its existing history – museums, literature – and arts-related organizations and museums. One of the greatest opportunities Ohio has during America 250 is to strengthen these organizations and ensure that they close out 2026 stronger than they are today. America 250 should amplify the excellent work already being done by statewide organizations like the Ohio Local History Alliance, Ohio Humanities, Ohio Arts Council, Ohio Museums Association, Heritage Ohio, Ohio Travel Association, Ohio History Connection, Ohioana Library, Ohio Genealogical Society, Ohio Council for Social Studies, Preservation Ohio, Ohio Archaeological Council, Society of Ohio Archivists, Ohio Citizens for the Arts, the Ohio Academy of History and many others. This report has discussed the importance of grants to support the events, programs and other activities described in these pages. Meanwhile, America 250-Ohio should connect all of this work to benefactors statewide – corporate partners, foundations and others. Below are many of the critical partnerships and funding opportunities that lie ahead:

Tourism Travel in Ohio drives economic prosperity and jobs in nearly every corner of the state. Direct visitor spending of \$35 billion in 2021 generated an overall impact of \$47 billion. Incorporating tourism-related strategies into America 250-Ohio is essential to its success and good for Ohio. Local Convention and Visitor Bureaus help direct visitors to Ohio attractions, restaurants, hotels and other places of interest. They will be important partners to help lead Ohio’s promotional efforts as well as effectively direct Ohioans and visitors to the programs and activities relating to America 250. TourismOhio is an indispensable resource to all of this work and the State of Ohio should increase significantly its financial support for TourismOhio to serve as a catalyst for generating enthusiasm for America 250 and economic return for Ohio and the local communities that benefit.

America 250 Communities Partnering with local Ohio communities during America 250 is essential. America 250-Ohio should create model local ordinances to encourage county commissions and other local units of government to commit to participating in America 250 in ways that fit each local community. Local governments that become “America 250 communities” can engage local citizens in activities that meet certain

minimal guidelines and allow America 250 to be localized to the fullest extent possible.

African American History The rich stories of African American history are told in many different ways in many different communities. Consider Ohio’s Black churches, whose powerful stories extend far beyond the pulpits. Ohio museums such as the National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center in





Wilberforce, the Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, the Funk Museum Hall of Fame & Exhibition Center in Dayton, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland are just a few examples of where else these powerful stories are told. The Carl and Louis Stokes stories are detailed at the Cleveland History Center while the Ohio History Center, with its state archives/research library in Columbus is filled with stories, artifacts and records of overcoming hardships as well as compelling success stories. A new Poindexter Village museum space in Columbus' Near East Side will open during America 250 and will tell the personal stories of African Americans like James Preston Poindexter and artist Aminah Robinson. Buffalo Soldier Charles Young was the highest-ranking Army officer (recently posthumously promoted from colonel to brigadier general) 100 years ago. The National Park Service has preserved his house in Wilberforce. These – and countless others – are illustrative of the under-told stories that America 250 can showcase across Ohio.

Philanthropic Support America 250-Ohio must be powered by a strong public-private partnership between the State of Ohio and our state's philanthropic community. The nation's 250th anniversary represents a generational moment in time to bring diverse people together for something much larger than themselves. This is a special occasion that calls upon all of us to use knowledge of our country's past to build a stronger future for us as Americans and Ohioans. We must look beyond past divisions and build upon our common heritage and shared goals. We must do this by building partnerships that bring together unique collaborations among the federal government, state elected leaders, corporate benefactors and our civic infrastructure of local organizations. If we do this right, the investments we make now and the legacies we create between now and 2026 will far outlive the life of the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial.

Technology and Social Media Nearly 250 years after declaring their independence, Americans have become less dependent on traditional media and previous



How Did the Ohio River Influence American History?

The Ohio River is formed from the joining of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers in Pittsburgh and was named for the Iroquois word, “O-Y-O,” (the great river). France was first to formally claim “La Belle Viviere” (the beautiful river) in 1749 when an expedition led by Celeron de Bienville placed lead plates near the outlets of Ohio’s major rivers. Disputes between the French and British for control of the Ohio River Valley’s rich fur trade and their relationships with the Native Americans living there, would eventually lead to the French and Indian War. In 1785 the United States built Fort Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum River. Three years later, Marietta’s first settlers fashioned a civilian fortification on a bluff, calling it Campus Martius, a portion of which has been preserved. The nation’s westward expansion that would double the size of America beyond its original 13 colonies began there. The importance of the Ohio River in choosing other settlement sites, and its use as a means of passenger travel as well as transportation of our state’s abundant agricultural, industrial, and commercial resources to distant markets, cannot be underestimated.

From its earliest pioneer settlements, the Ohio River also became the boundary line between the slave states of Virginia and Kentucky and the free territory of Ohio. It even acted as a logical extension of the Mason-Dixon line. A July 1845 incident involving the “kidnapping” of three Ohio abolitionists who were aiding escaped slaves near Belpre centered mainly around the water line boundary of the Ohio River. Their imprisonment in Virginia (now West Virginia) and ensuing court battle nearly led that state into open war with Ohio. Those escaping on the Underground Railroad likened the Ohio to crossing the River Jordan, it being the last obstacle on their quest for freedom in the “Promised Land.”

In September 1803, Meriwether Lewis used the Ohio River to recruit and gather supplies before meeting with William Clark in Louisville to begin their Corps of Discovery expedition to explore the West. Early ocean-going sailing ships were built along the Ohio, followed later by paddlewheel steamboats. Using this waterway, these vessels connected Ohio’s bountiful agricultural and commercial products (pottery, glassware, etc.) via the Mississippi River to markets in other parts of the country and the rest of the world. Ohio River barge traffic continues to supply America with significant energy resources fueling the economy. For many, the “Beautiful River” is a magnet for sportsmen, boaters and tourists.

modes of communication. Ben Franklin's printing presses have given way to a more digital age of GPS, smart phone apps and podcasting where the lines are increasingly blurred between those acting as experts and those in the audience. Twenty-first century audiences now demand high-performing technological applications as part of their museum and online experiences. America 250 must not disappoint. Many of the ideas presented in this report can be deployed either as part of in-person live experiences or in some combination with smart phone and video technology. Some examples include a digital passport app, webinars focused on America 250 or Ohio history, employing drone technology in community fireworks displays and using digital technology with images to contrast historic images with modern photography. Technology must be woven into essentially every America 250-Ohio initiative.

Ohio Innovation/Industry The story of Ohio innovation is an amazing one and should be better known. Ohio, the birthplace of Thomas Edison, has been a place of many firsts. Because it was the first state created from the Northwest Ordinance, it became the template for future states. Ohio is first in flight. Cincinnati's Procter & Gamble has been providing commercial innovations and products for more than 180 years. The military technology spun from Wright-Patterson AFB has transformed the world. Health care giants like the Cleveland Clinic, Cincinnati and Columbus Children's Hospitals are among the world's best. Over 4,000 bioscience companies employ about 80,000 bioscience workers, excluding healthcare providers. Cleveland was the first city to provide a traffic light. Dayton was long considered the invention/patent capital of the United States. No wonder the National Inventors Hall of Fame is headquartered in Ohio! Ohio's proud tradition as a world leader in manufacturing and industry lives on and will be celebrated. America 250 should capitalize on these innovative stories and amplify the work already being done across the state.

Labor The workforce that helped produce Ohio's heavy industrial output leading to modern-day innovations on the shoulders of the labor movement. The changing nature of America and its labor unions is certainly reflected in Ohio where the eight-hour workday, the creation of the American Federation of Labor and various union leaders have roots. Youngstown is

synonymous with steel mills and the labor movement. These are stories that reflect our national identity and can serve as a bridge between the past and the future during America 250.

Ohio Agriculture There are few Ohio stories more financially or historically significant than that of Ohio agriculture. People have been farming the land here in one way or another for thousands of years. The oldest farm in continuous operation in Ohio dates back 250 years this year. The 7th generation Smiley Farm in Adams County traces its history back to 1772, 31 years before Ohio statehood. In the early 1800s, John Chapman – better known as Johnny Appleseed – began traveling through the new state of Ohio establishing apple nurseries. About 100 years later, 4-H was founded in Clark County. Forty-four percent of Ohio is considered prime farmland, boasting 80,000 farms and nearly 15 million total farm acres. Food and agriculture is Ohio's top industry, a fact that may surprise many urban and suburban families. The technology employed in today's farm machinery and the investment necessary for its output is nothing short of revolutionary. America 250 should work closely with agricultural partners including the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Farm Bureau, 4-H, OSU Extension and individual farmers to connect these enduring stories about our agricultural heritage to the present and a future that is increasingly characterized by competitive global markets.

Veterans Ohio is home to an estimated 729,000 military veterans – more than all but four states (California, Texas, Florida and New York). Wright-Patterson AFB in the Dayton area is one of the largest military installations in the country. Meanwhile, Columbus was where the first meeting was held of what would become the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in 1899 and is today where the new National Veterans Memorial and Museum is located. Ohio has always been synonymous with military veterans. Marietta is the final resting place for the largest number of Revolutionary War officers in the United States; they came here looking for fertile land and new beginnings. Ohio and Ohio veterans also played outsized roles in winning the Civil War and two world wars. The contributions of our living veterans who served in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and elsewhere must be recognized and their experiences shared with others.



America 250 is a grand opportunity to pay homage to the military veterans of both our past and present

Immigration Stories The stories of America and Americans have historically been those of immigrants in search of something better. Ohio's history as an industrial powerhouse ensured that it offered plenty of jobs, especially from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s. Cities like Cleveland, Youngstown, Toledo, Akron, Canton, Dayton, Cincinnati, Lima and others were attractive to immigrants and migrating Appalachians alike in search of better opportunities where manufacturing jobs could be found. So, too, did Ohio benefit from large numbers of African Americans who sought a better future for themselves and their descendants by migrating from the Deep South. America 250 provides a great opportunity to find common ground and have conversations about how our ethnic and racial diversity makes Ohio's economy more competitive and our communities stronger. Anyone who has experienced or witnessed a U.S. naturalization ceremony has likely felt the emotional power and excitement of new American citizens standing proudly with an American flag, smiling with their family and friends. The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial should partner with the judicial

branch to support future naturalization ceremonies leading up to the nation's 250th anniversary.

American Indian Place Names Long before the United States claimed its Independence, what we now call the State of Ohio was homeland to American Indians. They were of many different cultures and left their mark on the land over millennia. After the American Revolution, American Indians who had called Ohio home gradually were pushed out as new towns and farmsteads grew in step with the new nation. The last tribes were forcefully removed in the early decades of the 19th century. Today many American Indians who look back to Ohio as their ancestral home live in other states. Now there is growing awareness of their contributions to our shared heritage. As part of America 250, Ohio should seek ways to educate the public about the origin and meaning (when it is well understood) of current Ohio place names that spring from American Indians. Many county names and a great number of streams and rivers for instance (e.g., Muskingum, Ottawa, Olentangy, Tuscarawas, Cuyahoga, Miami, and Maumee to name a few) reflect how American Indian culture and heritage continues to shape our lives. America 250-Ohio should partner with ODOT, tribal representatives and others to consider place signs delineating these important connections to Ohio's history and its people.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

Moving Ahead

Imagine yourself in the year 2026. It's not very distant. Is it friendly, colorful, a bit noisy? Are Americans coming together – at least to some extent – when you look ahead to 2026? How does it make you feel? It is easier and more convenient for us to look back. We know much more about our past than the future. But look forward we must. The best way to face the future is to be informed about what has happened in the past and why. This report serves as a menu for Ohioans to participate in the upcoming 250th anniversary of our nation. What we do next is up to us. We will not be able to do everything described in this report. Other excellent ideas will surface and we must be flexible and malleable to embrace additional ideas or ways to celebrate America 250.

As much as we have packed into this initial report, there is much more not referenced here that is still important and will be part of our journey toward 2026. Ohio presidents. Covered bridges. Ohio wineries. America 250-Ohio must also consider things like digitization projects, America 250 license plates, connecting bicycle trails, traveling exhibits, quilt projects and genealogical endeavors. We should support projects already underway such as the initiative to create a women's memorial on the Ohio Statehouse grounds. Federal and state historic preservation tax credits have been a powerful incentive to rehabilitate hundreds of Ohio's historic properties. We should highlight these initiatives.

Few people know about a historic document called "The Fort Gower Resolves." This was an early expression of the grievances of British American military officers and the increasing spirit of American Independence at a temporary frontier stockade in modern-day Ohio called Fort Gower. What is generally now referred to as The Fort Gower Resolves was written on November 5, 1774, and published in the Virginia Gazette the following month saying "...we resolve that we will exert every power within us for the defense of American Liberty, and for the support of her just rights and privileges...." America 250 offers the opportunity to bring this forgotten history into the light of day.

Our success these next few years will rely on bringing forgotten or under-told histories into the light while at the same time giving voice to those who were not central to previous national anniversaries. Ohio's Black churches, for example, have played an outsized role in shaping our communities and supplying leadership. How can America 250-Ohio support their ongoing work and that of other faith-based organizations as it relates to the nation's anniversary?

America 250 is truly a once-in-a-lifetime investment in Ohio and its people. This report reflects that Ohio's innovative contributions to America and the world are wide-ranging and historically powerful. We should budget appropriately and prioritize responsibly, blending state dollars with private sector support and philanthropic opportunities.

This is a time to unite Americans and Ohioans around our nation's founding. We should reflect back and we should look forward, informed by our past. As we build our budgets leading up to 2026, Ohioans will expect leadership – especially from their elected leaders – to take the lead now and position Ohio for success in the years ahead. The Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial looks forward to this journey moving forward.





Find out more about the Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial online:

<https://www.ohiohistory.org/America250-OhioCommission>

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