Carroll County Semiquincentennial Carroll 250 Report

Background:

In 2024, Carroll County Commissioners established by County Resolution No. 1217-2024, the Semiquincentennial Planning Advisory Committee to help guide local 250 initiatives. The Historical Society was designated as a lead liaison for promotion and coordination of efforts. Key partners taking leadership initiative for the 250 efforts included the County's Celebrating America Committee, County Parks and Recreation Department, County Tourism Office and the Carroll County Public Library.

The theme "Carroll Voices," showcased individuals and stories that shaped democratic society. The commemoration's primary goal was to share with the public that democracy is an ongoing effort, recognizing the roles diverse people played in achieving liberty and prosperity.

The 250 Planning Committee was comprised of the following individuals representing different disciplines and organizations:

Jason Illari,
HSCC Executive Director & Advisory Committee Chair

Laura Bankard,
HSCC Outreach and Events Director

Joe Thompson,
Celebrating America Co-Chair & County Library Director of Public Services

Ryan Melhorn,
Celebrating America Co-Chair & Carroll County Public Schools Supervisor of Secondary Social Studies

Kyle Dalton,
Union Mills Homestead Executive Director

Sam Riley,
Union Mills Homestead Foundation President

Commissioner Tom Gordon III,
District III

Stephen Strosnider,
Carroll County Arts Council

Melissa Thorn,
City of Westminster Economic Development Coordinator

Daphne Daly,
Deputy Director, Carroll County Department of Planning and Land Management

Judy Rang,
City of Hampstead, HR Coordinator

Elaine Shirley,
Curator, Carroll County Farm Museum

John Laycock,
Westminster Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution

Bonnie Staub,
Carroll County Tourism Office, Department of Economic Development

Roger Siedel,
Carroll County Genealogical Society

The 250 Planning Committee focused much of its effort on supporting, sustaining, and coordinating a vast cross-section of historical initiatives, lectures, and small scale events to bring attention to the Semiquincentennial. Quarterly Public Forums were also coordinated and held in publicly accessible locations throughout Carroll County in order to solicit feedback from the community about 250 activities and initiatives.

Carroll 250 Speaker Series Initiative:

The 250 Program Committee presented approximately 55 speakers and events hosted in the towns of Westminster, Eldersburg, Manchester, Mount Airy, Finksburg, Taneytown, Hampstead, and New Windsor with over 2,000 people attending. The attendees were mostly adults, but we hosted several kid-friendly events as well. The committee partnered with the Community Media Center to make pre-selected 250 talks available on community television and the HSCC You-Tube Channel.

Carroll County Government Signature Events Initiative:

In coordination with County Government offices, special promotion and marketing was dedicated to highlighting six Carroll 250 Signature events which were not only promoted on the Carroll 250 website but also highlighted on a special county-designated webpage, billboards and physical banners and signs. These signature events included:

- May 3rd Veterans Event at the Farm Museum

- May 25th Memorial Day Parade
- June 20th American Revolution Living History Weekend at Union Mills Homestead
- 4th of July Let Freedom Ring Parade in Sykesville, Maryland
- The 4th of July Celebration hosted at the Carroll County Farm Museum featuring historic building tours, live artisan entertainment, and a terrific fireworks display. The Carroll 250 promotional booth was also on site for the event.
- July 9th Carroll County at 250: People, Place, and the Making of History Exhibit Opening (see below for more information).

Other Carroll 250 Initiatives of Note:

- In the summer of 2024 a liberty tree was planted at Union Mills Homestead to help kick off 250 activities
- In partnership with the Carroll County Coin Club, the planning committee produced a custom $10 commemorative medal. It is sold at participating local historic sites and museums, with all proceeds directly financing ongoing America 250 programs.
- Public Reading of the Declaration of Independence took place on July 8th 2026. Carroll County joined more than 600 communities across the nation in commemorating the 250th Anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. The event was held at the Historic Carroll County Courthouse, 200 Willis Street, Westminster.
- Highlighting events and programs beyond July 4th was also an important goal. A special proclamation on Constitution Day was coordinated by the County Commissioners and special attention was given to Election Day and Veterans Day in November. Furthermore, Voices of the Maryland 400: Maryland's Revolutionary War Soldiers at the Battle of Brooklyn in 1776 presented by Owen Lourie in December to cap off the Semiquincentennial year.
- The TownMall of Westminster hosted a community celebration for the United States' 250th birthday on Friday, June 26, 2026, at 2:00 PM in Center Court. The event featured live music, the Pledge of Allegiance, refreshments, remarks from local leaders, and a display of 250 American, state, and military flags.
- Carroll at 250 Flagship Exhibition, *Carroll at 250: People, Place, and the Making of History*, opened on July 9, 2026, and runs to the end of 2027 (see appendix A for a listing of loaned objects). The exhibition, curated at the Historical Society of Carroll County examines the community's evolving ties to revolutionary ideals and has an original copy of the Declaration under secure display. A youth and children's scavenger hunt has been developed for the exhibit in coordination with the Carroll County Public Library. A full digital catalog of the exhibit items is located online at:

https://hub.catalogit.app/historical-society-of-carroll-county-maryland/folder/carroll-at-250-people-place-and-the-making-of-history

- The Carroll County Public Library spearheaded 2026's Celebrating America Summer Adventure Program from May to September 2026. This program was designed for students, grades 1 – 9 and gives them a unique opportunity to see sites around Carroll County and learn about rich local history. A special 250 exhibit scavenger hunt was developed for the closing event.
- The 250 Planning Committee supported the Carroll County Public Schools National History Day Program and student expo at Winters Mill High School on February 28th 2026 where the theme "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History" was highlighted.
- Travelling Exhibit Initiative Revolutionary Tavern Replica was a touring 10-by-10-foot interactive replica of a Revolutionary-era tavern that traveled to various county events to offer hands-on history education. The exhibit is a replica of a revolutionary-era tavern with interactive elements and historical themes related to the Semiquincentennial. An exhibit trifold was included with the exhibit.
- Free 250 Time Capsules Initiative; HSCC and the 250 Planning Committee offered complimentary 250-themed time capsules for Carroll County families, by filling out a simple form online. Each stainless-steel time capsule included a user guide/lesson plan.
- Several featured publications highlighted 250 history and activities in the county including the 2026 publication of Carroll History Magazine, a special 3-day edition of the Carroll County Times which ran 250 related articles and a printing of the Declaration during the 4th of July weekend, and a featured 250 article in the Carroll News.
- The City of Westminster celebrated 250 years of freedom through a few special history projects. Supported through a non-capital grant from the Maryland Historical Trust, Westminster's Historic District is currently undergoing a consultant study of existing historic district resources, to ensure treasured historic character is protected. A public map will be generated to show these results. New Signature gateway signage welcoming residents and visitors into the Historic District has been placed at Uniontown Rd. coming onto West Main Street as well as heading east on East Main Street near Colonial Dr. As you enter the City's historic core, the signs remind the public of the importance of this district. Additional welcome signage is planned for installation at other main entrances into Downtown Westminster. During the summer months, buildings were adorned with colonial-inspired bunting, banners, and patriotic décor during the summer season to create a unified America 250 celebration throughout Westminster, which included a residential and

commercial decorating contest. The winners of the contest was 32 Glen Oak Court, 48 Liberty Street, Sterling Quality Water at 7 East Main Street, and Flowers by Evelyn at 92 ½ East Main Street. A Liberty Tree was planted at City Hall. This sapling from St. John's College, in Annapolis, was planted as a lasting symbol of freedom, patriotism, and civic remembrance. As a collective Carroll County 250 initiative among the municipalities, a beautiful online digital map, called a StoryMap, was created to highlight many of the historic assets in each of our communities, with descriptions and audio files for full understanding of these places. The City is fortunate to have been able to partner with Carroll County Economic Development and Carroll County GIS Departments to achieve this project.

- Carroll 250's logo was created by Carroll Community College student Rachel Hughes, a proud Carroll County resident for 21 years, starting from when her family moved to the area when she was 3. Rachel says her logo was inspired by the local history of Carroll County, with the inclusion of both the Carroll County District Courthouse, the first reaping machine, the American Flag, Maryland Flag, and the musket. The courthouse idea in particular was mentioned by her mother, and she credits her mom for that inspiration.

Funding Support:

Carroll 250 initiatives, programs, exhibits, publications, and events were financially supported by two primary funding sources. A special $15,000 grant from Carroll County government matched a $15,000 grant from the Maryland 250 State Commission for a total of $30,000 utilized for Carroll 250 activities.

A full breakdown of expenses is provided in the respective agency's final grant reporting documentation to be submitted by December 31st 2026.

Appendix A

Carroll at 250: People, Place and the Making of History Community and Institutional Loans

Institutions:

Homewood Museum, Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums

- Charles Carroll of Carrollton silver snuff box

Union Mills Homestead Foundation

- Centennial Exhibition "Stock Certificate"
- Centennial Exhibition “Certificate of Award”
- Surveyors transit
- Run-away advertisement, reproduction

Heritage Frederick, Frederick County Archives and Research Center

- Book, *History of the American Revolution in scripture, to which is added the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the farewell address of General Washington,* printed by Mattias Bartgis

Dickinson College, Archives & Special Collections

- Letter from Roger B. Taney to Joshua Gist

Maryland Center for History & Culture

- Evan Lloyd Crawford pastel by J.F. Kemmelmeyer
- Abraham Crapster pastel by J.F. Kemmelmeyer
- Shriver family meeting minutes (image reproduction), 1833
- Notes for a speech by Andrew Shriver (image reproduction), 1833
- Letter from Andrew Shriver to Andrew F. Shriver (image reproduction), 1837

Fashion Archives & Museum, Shippensburg University,

- Museum mannequins and clothing mounting accessories

Gettysburg College, Special Collections and College Archives

- Declaration of Independence Broadside in German (image reproduction)

Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab

- "Legh" pig iron fragment

Individuals:

The Thomas S. Gordon Family

- Framed Declaration of Independence, "Dunlop Broadside," reproduction
- Framed Carroll County Charter,
- Deed between Legh Master and Leigh Castle, June 18, 1776
- A.K. Shriver & Sons leather medallion
- American Indian artifacts
- Patriotic andirons, c. 1820-1830

Dr. Vimala Naganna

- Saree
- Radha-Krishna Murti (sacred statue)

Susanna Gardiner Key Neal

- Bruce-Key family silver creamer

Mark & Terry Snyder

- W. P. Englar & Son Bunting, rolled

Ryan Melhorn

- Bicentennial wall hanging, 1976

Sherry Hartman

- Mary Gist's robe a la Francaise (reproduction), 2026

Karen Frederick

- Kobb Family archival collection