



**MA  
250**

**Field Guide**



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# The Field Guide

The 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution in Massachusetts has a unique opportunity to inspire and engage communities across the Commonwealth. This field guide provides essential resources and guidelines to help you create meaningful and impactful celebrations and commemorations. By focusing on innovation, diversity, community engagement, and educational opportunities, we can create a lasting legacy that celebrates the spirit of revolution and inspires future generations.

# A Vision for the Semiquincentennial of the American Revolution in Massachusetts

Dear Friends and Community Members,

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, let us not only reflect on our past but also embrace the future. Massachusetts has always been a hub of innovation and progress, a place where groundbreaking ideas take root and transformative change occurs.

Let us use this milestone as an opportunity to reimagine our state and our nation. By understanding our history, we can better navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future. Let us inspire the next generation of innovators, leaders, and citizens to carry the torch of progress and create a brighter tomorrow for all. Join us in celebrating Massachusetts' rich heritage and embracing its boundless potential. Together, we can shape a future that is as revolutionary as our past.

Sincerely,



**Kate Fox**  
Executive Director, Massachusetts Office  
of Travel and Tourism



**Sheila Green**  
Coordinator, 250th Anniversary of the  
American Revolution at MOTT



# Planning for the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Revolution in Massachusetts

## **Massachusetts: The Birthplace of Liberty** (1774-1776)

**Relive the revolution.** Massachusetts was at the heart of the American Revolution. Explore your city or town's role in this pivotal period, from the Boston Tea Party to the British Evacuation.

**Join the celebration.** The Massachusetts 250th commemoration is a collaborative effort. We're working with museums, scholars, tribal communities, historical societies, and tourism partners to create a truly immersive experience.

**Share your story.** Are you hosting an event or exhibit dedicated to the battles and events that unfolded in Massachusetts between 1774 and 1776? Share your story! Post your information on the official website: [massachusetts250.org/events/community/add](https://massachusetts250.org/events/community/add)

Support local businesses. Patronize businesses that are participating in Massachusetts 250 activities. To find participating businesses, visit the [events page](#).

Looking for additional events? Visit [visitma.com](https://visitma.com) to discover other events and activities happening across Massachusetts, even if they're not directly related to the 250th anniversary.

Follow [@Massachusetts250](#) on social media to stay up to date on events, learn about our history, and share your own stories. Use the hashtag [#OURFIRST250](#) to connect with other history enthusiasts and join the conversation.

**Together, let's ignite  
a passion for history  
and celebrate the  
revolutionary spirit  
of Massachusetts.**



# Our History: A Mirror, A Compass

History is more than a collection of facts; it's a reflection of our past and a roadmap for our future. By examining how people overcame challenges in the past, we can find inspiration and solutions for the present.

When history is incomplete or biased, we risk losing valuable insights and perspectives. Let's ensure that the stories we tell reflect the diversity of the American experience, honoring the contributions of all.

As we celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary, let's tell stories that resonate with everyone. By seeing ourselves in history, we can feel empowered to shape our own destiny.

**True liberty comes from understanding our past and actively shaping our future.**

Let's use this opportunity to connect with our history, inspire each other, and build a stronger, more equitable nation for all.

# Themes of Massachusetts 250

## Revolution

1774 – 1776 represents a time when American Patriots fought for independence from British rule. What does revolution represent to you? Consider this question as you plan to commemorate and celebrate the American Revolution and Massachusetts history.

## Historical Legacy

The American Revolution began right here in Massachusetts. It had a profound effect on the development of democratic principles and governance and the future of the United States of America. The American Revolution established foundational ideas about liberty, rights, and the role of government in society. Though we are not the only “free” country, we acknowledge the battles fought for this privilege. However, freedom and independence are still being fought for every day around the world. From 1775 until today, Americans of all backgrounds, ages, and nationalities have continued to fight for our freedoms.

Programming for this theme can help audiences consider the following:

**What** is our legacy?

**Who** has historically lived in your community, and how did they experience significant events in our past?

**How** is this constantly evolving?

**How** does your community appreciate the battles fought for the freedoms that we have today?

**What** does independence mean to you?

## Innovation and Progress

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a hub of historical depth and represents a legacy of firsts and innovations that have impacted the world. Highlight Massachusetts’ contributions to science, technology, and culture. This theme allows us to examine how our history impacted modern happenings. During the last 250 years Massachusetts has been home to hundreds of innovations that have had global implications.

Programming for this theme can help audiences consider the following:

**What** firsts took place in your community?

**What** innovations do you celebrate and commemorate in your community?

**How** did that innovation impact the world?

**Where** are places visitors can learn more?





## Community and Diversity

Since the nation's founding, definitions of "the people," the boundaries of national belonging, and the very nature of citizenship have changed. For much of our history, the United States has excluded people—women, free and enslaved African Americans, Indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, low-income people, and many others—from full participation and representation in the nation's political, economic, and cultural life. Yet over time, the United States has also incorporated people of different backgrounds into our society, as diverse populations have staked their claim to belonging and pressed for a more pluralistic, more equitable nation. Emphasize the importance of unity and inclusivity.

Programming for this theme can help audiences consider the following:

**What** are some untold or unknown stories to share from the women, Black, enslaved, and Indigenous in your community?

**How** did diverse people experience and influence the events of the American Revolution in different ways?

**Who** is considered an "American"—and who gets to decide?

**How, when, and why** have definitions of "the people" and ideas about belonging changed in Massachusetts?

**When** has there been progress—and setbacks—in the fight for rights and justice?

**How** might the perspectives of different individuals or groups change how we think about the ongoing process of becoming "a more perfect union"?

## Education and Culture

Celebrate contributions to the arts and education in Massachusetts while embracing our history as the cradle for learning and progress. Massachusetts is the home of the first public school, first college and university and first public library. Today, Massachusetts has 93 colleges, universities, including private public and research institutions. Across the state our cultural centers enrich communities, grow the economy, increase accessibility, and foster individual creativity. Share these riches and resources.

Programming for this theme can help audiences consider the following:

**What** cultural centers are making a difference in your community?

**How** can you engage your cultural centers to embrace our history?

**How** has your community contributed to change through education?

**Where** are the places of culture that people can visit?

Can we be helpful? Reach out to [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) for more information about the Massachusetts 250.

# Tours and Trails

## **Community and Diversity**

With 351 cities and towns to explore, Massachusetts is where the people embrace our history. Utilize your neighboring communities by working together to create tours and trails that connect your towns and historic pasts. Whether you're a new visitor, resident, or a returning visitor, exploring Massachusetts' national parks and beaches is a great way to discover the state's hidden gems and create unforgettable memories.

Communities are encouraged to put together enhanced tours and trails for the Massachusetts 250th anniversary encouraging people to visit multiple sites. This could include combining museums with sightseeing spots, dining and shopping, trails to hike, or including special ways to identify items from the revolutionary era.

## **Tours**

What does a Revolutionary Tour mean? Create Revolutionary Tours of all things from revolutionary times in your community. This could include parks, buildings, exhibits, commemorations, plaques, statues, etc. That tour can include stops at other significant sites in your community. Include restaurants and other locations that visitors can experience.

## **Trails**

Trails represent outside experiences. Working with surrounding communities, create trails to connect and explore revolutionary history in your community and with surrounding towns.

## **Museums**

Museums can curate content and co-brand artifacts with the [Massachusetts 250 logo](#). Use the Massachusetts 250 logo to show pieces, murals, artifacts, and more representing revolutionary times. To identify each piece, you can create a small plaque with the Massachusetts 250 logo and the statement, "Massachusetts 250 is a statewide commemoration of Massachusetts history from 1774-1776". The guidelines for using the Massachusetts 250 logo are on pages 17 and 18 of this Field Guide. Through this program, you can create a self-guided tour of revolutionary history.

## **Libraries**

The Massachusetts Library Commissioners have created revolutionary-themed reading lists that highlight books representing revolutionary times or are revolutionary themed for all 367 libraries across the Commonwealth.



## **School Curriculum**

- **National History Day**

The Massachusetts Historical Society is offering National History Day for school curriculums across the Commonwealth. The 2024-2025 school year theme is "Rights and Responsibilities," and for 2025-2026, "Revolution Reaction and Reform."

To learn more about this program and implement it into your curriculum or for an after-school program, email [info@masshistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@masshistoricalsociety.org).

- **America 250 – America’s Field Trip: What does America mean to you?**

America’s Field Trip is a contest partnering America 250 with the National Park Services that invites students across the country in grades 3-12 to participate in America’s 250th anniversary by sharing their perspectives on what America means to them and having the opportunity to participate in an unforgettable field trip experiences at some of the nation’s most iconic historic and cultural landmarks.

To learn more about and implement this program into your curriculum or after school programs, visit [america250.org/fieldtrip](http://america250.org/fieldtrip).

Reach out to [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) to learn more about building tours and trails in your community.

# Building Revolutionary Weekends: How to Create a Must-See Experience

All 351 cities and towns across the Commonwealth have an opportunity to embrace the weekends leading up to and including the many commemorations, celebrations, exhibits and programs featuring the history of the American Revolution in Massachusetts by creating unique and engaging experiences for visitors. Showcase your region's revolutionary history through behind-the-scenes tours, artifact displays, or access to exclusive archives. Show visitors something that is not normally on display for the public to see or experience.

## **What is a Revolutionary Weekend?**

A revolutionary weekend is a chance to explore your history, untold stories, and share behind-the-scenes experiences. To foster a statewide appreciation for our revolutionary heritage, we suggest dedicating the first weekend of each month to Revolutionary Weekends. For example: John Adams may be a regular reenactor at your site. On a Revolutionary Weekend, invite his wife Abigail and or son John Quincy Adams. If you have a special artifact from revolutionary times in your archives bring it out for a special two-day exhibit. Revolutionary Weekends are a time to be creative and inclusive. Create a sculpture, time capsule, a piece of art, or mural that is revolutionary in theme.

**Boost your tourism.** By offering these immersive experiences, you can attract more visitors to your town or region. These Revolutionary Weekends will not only celebrate our history but also boost local tourism and economies.

**Join the celebration!** Spread the word about your events by sharing details on the [Massachusetts250.org](https://massachusetts250.org) website and amplify its reach on social media using the initiative hashtags [#OURFIRST250](https://twitter.com/OURFIRST250) and [#Massachusetts250](https://twitter.com/Massachusetts250). This will help connect with a wider audience and ensure your event gets the recognition it deserves.

**Share your event.** Post your events on [massachusetts250.org/events/community/add](https://massachusetts250.org/events/community/add)

# The Many Firsts of Massachusetts

Massachusetts has over 300 innovations and firsts, and some are profoundly memorable. Is your city or town home to an innovation and first? If yes, there are multiple opportunities for them to be embraced.



# #OurFirsts

**1776** First battle in the Revolution (Battle of Lexington)

**1780** First state constitution

**1789** First American novel published by William Hill Brown in Worcester

**1826** First American railroad, built in Quincy

**1837** First electric telegraph (Invented by Samuel Morse)

**1840** First typewriter by Charles Thurber in Worcester

**1845** First sewing machine by Eliason Howe in Boston

**1850** First nation Women's rights convention in Worcester

**1876** First telephone call by Alexander Graham Bell in Boston

**1891** Invention of basketball by James Naismith in Springfield

**1895** Invention of volleyball in Holyoke

**1897** Oldest annual Marathon (Boston Marathon)

**1897** First American subway system, built in Boston

**1906** First wireless broadcast of music and entertainment by Reginald A. Fessenden in Marshfield

- 1926** First liquid-fueled rocket launched by Dr. Robert Goddard in Auburn
- 1935** First woman to hold a committee chair in the Massachusetts State Legislature (Mary Livermore Norris Barrows)
- 1939** Chocolate chip cookie invented by Ruth Graves in Whitman
- 1944** First automatic digital computer at Harvard
- 1947** First chemotherapy treatment for cancer patient by Dr. Sidney Farber
- 1973** First Black woman elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature (Doris Bunte)
- 1979** First woman to serve as House minority whip (Iris Holland)
- 1986** First woman to serve as lieutenant governor (Evelyn Murphy)
- 1994** The World Wide Web (Invented by MIT professor Tim Berners-Lee)
- 2004** First state to legalize equality marriage
- 2005** The first version of Facebook live for students at Harvard



# Marketing and Communications

The Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) is launching a two-year, multi-channel marketing and advertising campaign to ignite the spirit of liberty and inspire travel to the birthplace of American freedom. This immersive campaign will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, weaving together the past, present, and future of liberty in Massachusetts.

## The Campaign Experience

- Broadcast, print, and social media ads: compelling statewide, regional, and national ads will capture the essence of Massachusetts' role in the fight for liberty.
- [Massachusetts250.org](https://Massachusetts250.org): the campaign hub will serve as a dynamic resource for visitors, offering interactive historical timelines, travel itineraries, special event listings, and links to book their Massachusetts adventure.

**Engage with us.** Sign up for our monthly newsletter at [Massachusetts250.org](https://Massachusetts250.org) and be the first to hear about special events, historical insights, and hidden gems across the state.

**Share your event.** Amplify your events by adding them to the [Massachusetts250.org](https://Massachusetts250.org) website: [massachusetts250.org/events/community/add](https://massachusetts250.org/events/community/add)





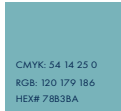
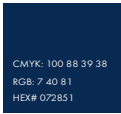
# MA250 Logo

Use the Massachusetts 250 logo to show that your events are part of the MA250 campaign.



Email [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) for more information about the Massachusetts 250.

# Massachusetts 250 Style and Brand Guide



Headline

**Mencken Std Head  
Narrow ExtraBold**

Subtitle

**Futura PT Bold**

Body

Futura PT Book

## Using the Massachusetts 250 Logo

Show your support for the MA 250 initiative by using the official logo in your promotional materials. Brand guidelines and standards are available above.

## Website, Maps, Guides and Programs

Use the Massachusetts 250 logo on your website, tours and trails, maps, travel guides and program books to showcase your statewide engagement in the Massachusetts 250.

## Banners and Flags

Promote your participation in the MA 250 initiative by creating banners, sidewalk flags, and other signage featuring the official logo. This will help inform people that your venue is part of the statewide celebration.

Questions? Reach out to [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) to learn more about how to promote your Revolutionary history engaging Massachusetts250.

# The Advertising Campaign

The Massachusetts 250 advertising campaign celebrates the revolutionary spirit that shaped our Commonwealth, highlights its enduring legacy of possibility, and invites visitors to explore the vibrant culture, historic sites, and endless opportunities that Massachusetts offers today. Key messaging includes:

**“Our First 250 was Revolutionary”:** This theme emphasizes the historical significance of the American Revolution in Massachusetts. It evokes a sense of pride, patriotism, and curiosity about the events that shaped the Commonwealth.

**“A History of Possibility”:** This theme highlights the enduring legacy of the Revolution and its impact on the present day. It underscores Massachusetts as a place where innovation, opportunity, and progress thrive.

# Media Relations

Here’s how MOTT can help:

- Add [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) to your media list to share your media coverage with us so that we can amplify it on [massachusetts250.org](http://massachusetts250.org) and our social channels.
- If a reporter or news outlet reaches out about an event or an exhibition happening in your community, keep us in the know.
- Add us to your media list.

If you would like a representative from the Healey/Driscoll Administration to speak to the reporter to support your program, event or story let us know.

The MOTT team can be reached by email at [massachusetts250@mass.gov](mailto:massachusetts250@mass.gov) or by phone (857) 408-0060.



# Social Media

## Posting Events

If you are posting about an event or exhibit specific to honoring the battles and other commemorations around Massachusetts from 1774 -1776, include our hashtags.

Use #OURFIRST250 and #Massachusetts250 and tag @visitma and @massachusetts250 when posting on Instagram, LinkedIn, Threads, or Facebook. This allows us to repost to generate more attention for your events and activities in your community.

**Instagram:** @visitma, #OURFIRST250, #Massachusetts250, @Massachusetts250

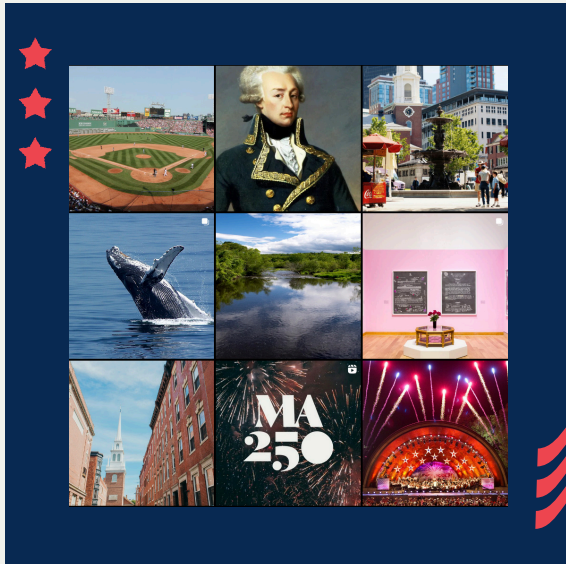
**Facebook:** @Massachusetts250

**LinkedIn:** @Massachusetts250

**Threads:** @visitma, @Massachusetts250

Amplify your events by adding them to the Massachusetts250 website at [massachusetts250.org/events/community/add](https://massachusetts250.org/events/community/add)

Looking to host a public event or exhibit unrelated to the Massachusetts 250? Visit [visitma.com](https://visitma.com) to submit your details.



# Public Transportation

As you embark on your Massachusetts 250 adventure, consider exploring Massachusetts utilizing its extensive, and first-in-nation, public transportation network. Public transportation offers a convenient, sustainable, and immersive way to experience the state's diverse offerings. Visit [mbta.com](http://mbta.com) for a full map of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) network. You can also utilize the Regional Transit Authority for public transportation outside of Boston.



© MBTA 2022 v.37  
Not to scale

# Massachusetts Explorations: Go Green!

Leave the car behind and embrace a more sustainable, scenic Massachusetts 250 experience. From the iconic MBTA to car sharing companies, explore diverse travel options:

- Hop on a bike: Explore charming cities with BLUEbikes.
- Ride the bus: discover hidden gems using Ipswich/Essex Explorer buses.
- Take a scenic ferry ride: Enjoy breathtaking coastal views on the Salem Ferry or Provincetown Ferry or explore Boston Harbor on Boston Harbor City Cruises. Or take the MBTA ferry to Charlestown or the South Shore.
- Travel back in time: Experience the revolutionary past with Lexington's Liberty Ride Trolley, Boston Duck Boat Tours, and more.

For more green travel options, visit [visitma.com/ma-green/going-car-free](https://www.visitma.com/ma-green/going-car-free).

# Public Safety

Public safety plays an important role in any event that engages the public. Be sure to coordinate with your local police, fire, emergency management and EMS teams to keep them informed and create a plan. Emergencies can happen at any time and at any place. Create a communications plan to ensure that all parties are aware of the event logistics and specifics. When hosting an event with a large group of attendees, make sure you are ready and have a plan to respond. Consider:

- Transportation and alternate routes
- Visitor guidelines, including any restrictions
- How to communicate with attendees in the event of a weather disruption or emergency.

Local public safety agencies may contact their designated Local Coordinator at the [Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency](#) for special event public safety planning resources and technical assistance. Law enforcement support may be requested from the Massachusetts State Police or mutual aid consortium.



# Massachusetts 250 Commission

The Special Commission on 250th Anniversary Celebration of the American Revolution is a state-appointed body responsible for overseeing and coordinating the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in Massachusetts. Established in 2021, the Commission's primary goal is to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for celebrating this significant milestone. Below is a list of members of the Commission.

## **Senate**

Michael J. Barrett  
Ryan C. Fattman  
Edward J. Kennedy  
Paul W. Mark – Co-Chair

## **House**

Mindy Domb – Co-Chair  
Jeffrey N. Roy  
David T. Viera

## **Other**

Suzanne (Suzie) Barry  
Brain Boyles  
Kristin Karl Carnahan  
Scott E. Casper  
Abigail B. Chandler, PhD  
Michael Comeau  
Michael S. Creasey  
Casey Cullen  
Kate Fox  
Sheila Green  
Kenneth B. Hiscoe III  
James F. Hollister  
Gavin Kleespies  
Irene Barbara Krauthamer, PhD  
Michael Lawson

Kerima M. Lewis  
Lieut. Col. Geoffrey E. Love  
Erin Kelly Miranda  
Thomas J. Moreau  
David O'Donnell  
John Peters, Jr.  
Paula P. Renkas  
Ray Anthony Shepard  
Brona Simon  
Kyera Singleton  
David (Dave) Slatery  
Susanne Taylor  
Councilor David Weeden  
Ryan J. Woods



# American Revolution Timeline

## 1774

- May 13: General Thomas Gage replaces Hutchinson as Governor of Boston.
- June 1: British Navy blockades Boston Harbor per Coercive Act.
- June 2: Parliament passed the Quartering Act, requiring American colonists to provide shelter to British troops and horses when requested.
- September: General Gage, the Governor of Boston, responded to increased threats of violence from the American colonists by fortifying Boston Neck, the thin spit of land connecting Boston to the mainland. This move effectively cut the city of Boston off from the rest of Massachusetts, placing the city under siege.
- September 1: Powder Alarm, General Gage's secret raid on the Cambridge powder magazine
  - A major popular reaction to the removal of gunpowder from a magazine near Boston by British soldiers under orders from General Thomas Gage, royal governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, on September 1, 1774. In response to this action, amid rumors that blood had been shed, alarm spread through the countryside to Connecticut and beyond, and American Patriots sprang into action, fearing that war was at hand. Thousands of militiamen began streaming toward Boston and Cambridge, and mob action forced Loyalists and some government officials to flee.
  - Although it proved to be a false alarm, the Powder Alarm caused political and military leaders to proceed more carefully in the days ahead, and essentially provided a "dress rehearsal" for the Battles of Lexington and Concord seven and a half months later. Furthermore, actions on both sides to control weaponry, gunpowder, and other military supplies became more contentious, as the British sought to bring military stores more directly under their control, and the Patriot colonists sought to acquire them for their own use.
- September 5 – October 25: Twelve colonies, all but Georgia, sent 56 delegates to Philadelphia to participate in the First Continental Congress. The purpose of the First Continental Congress was to debate and plan a unified response to British policy and actions. It was the first time many of these influential men had met face to face.
- September 9: A declaration was made by the leaders of Suffolk County Massachusetts. The declaration rejected the Massachusetts Government Act and resulted in a boycott of imported goods from Britain.

- October: General Gage dissolved the Massachusetts General Court in attempt to thwart colonial power over Massachusetts. Members of the court reconvened as the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and voted to recruit 12,000 men for a militia (composed of American minutemen — colonists prepared to fight the British on a minute’s notice) and purchase 5,000 muskets and bayonets.

## 1775

- March 30 — April 5: General Gage ordered his troops on a practice march around Boston. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress at Concord viewed the British march as an act of open hostility. They issued formal grievances against the British government and adopted fifty-three articles of war against the British army.
- General Gage planned a secret night march on Concord to seize the colonists’ store of weapons. Paul Revere immediately rode out over Boston Neck towards Lexington to warn John Hancock and Samuel Adams, fellow members of the Sons of Liberty. After Revere reached Lexington, he went to Concord where he was caught and questioned by six British officers. The officers left Revere horseless and stranded near Lexington.
- On the night of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere rode from Charlestown to Lexington to warn that the British were marching from Boston to seize the colonial armory at Concord.
- When Paul Revere did not immediately return home from his “Midnight Ride”, Rachel Revere wrote a letter to her husband, Paul Revere, sending him 125 pounds and her prayers for his safety.
  - Revere asked Benjamin Church, a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and Sons of Liberty, to deliver her letter and money to her husband. Unbeknownst to Rachel and other members of the Sons of Liberty, Benjamin Church was a British loyalist and delivered her letter to General Gage instead.
- April 19: Battle of Lexington and Concord
  - The first shots of the Revolutionary War are fired at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. The news of the bloodshed rockets along the eastern seaboard, and thousands of volunteers converge—called “Minute Men”—on Cambridge. These are the beginnings of the Continental Army.
  - En route, the British force of 700 men was met on Lexington Green by 77 local minutemen and others. It is unclear who fired the first shot, but it sparked a skirmish that left eight Americans dead. At Concord, the British were met by hundreds of militiamen. Outnumbered and running low on ammunition, the British column was forced to retire to Boston. On the return march, American snipers took a deadly toll on the British. Total losses in the Battles of Lexington and Concord numbered 273 British and more than 90 Americans.
  - In Lexington, 130 minutemen, warned by Paul Revere, met the British troops in attempt to stop the army from reaching Concord. The American patriots were outnumbered and began to disperse. However, a shot was fired and the British troops killed eight colonists and wounded ten. The British troops continued for Concord where they were met by 150 minutemen. The fighting was light and plagued by the lack of discipline of the patriot minuteman. The British troops withdrew back to Boston after a mostly ineffectual search for hidden patriot weapons. The patriot minuteman raced ahead of the British army, hiding behind

trees, rocks, houses and barns alongside the roads. The British army made an easy target for patriot snipers as they marched in straight lines in their red uniforms. The British troops returned to the safety of the Bunker and Breed's hills outside Charlestown, protected by the gunner ships lying in the Charles River.

- April 19, 1775 - March 17, 1776: Siege of Boston the opening phase of the American Revolutionary War. In the siege, American patriot militia led by newly installed Continental Army commander George Washington prevented the British Army, which was garrisoned in Boston, from moving by land. Both sides faced resource, supply, and personnel challenges during the siege. British resupply and reinforcement were limited to sea access, which was impeded by American vessels. The British ultimately abandoned Boston after eleven months, moving their troops and equipment north, to Nova Scotia.
- April 23: The Massachusetts Provincial Congress called up 30,000 new militiamen and contacted other New England colonies requesting their help in raising the necessary troops to fight the British.
- May 6: Benjamin Thompson, a well-known American colonist and scientist, wrote an unidentified member of General Gage's staff a letter with a secret message written in invisible ink. In the letter, Thompson detailed the movements of the Rebel Army and complained about his treatment at the hands of the "deluded people" who rise against the king.
- June 15: George Washington appointed commander-in-chief of all the American troops by the Continental Congress.
- June 14: Congress votes to create Continental Army out of the militia units around Boston and appointed George Washington of Virginia as commanding general. This would later become the modern United States Army
- June 16: During the Siege of Boston, the Second Continental Congress authorized the preparation of fortifications. Thus, at the ensuing Battle of Bunker Hill, colonists fired at the British from a redoubt at the top of the hill and from behind fences reinforced with vegetation and brush. The engineers' work proved so valuable to the Revolutionary forces that Congress created the Corps of Engineers four years later.
- June 17: Battle of Bunker Hill
  - o In the first major action of the war, inexperienced colonial soldiers hold off hardened British veterans for more than two hours at Breed's Hill. Although eventually forced to abandon their position, including the high ground of Bunker Hill overlooking Boston, the patriots show that they are not intimidated by the long lines of red coated infantrymen. Of the 2,200 British seeing action, more than 1,000 end up dead or wounded.
  - o Breed's Hill in Charlestown was the primary locus of combat in the misleadingly named Battle of Bunker Hill, which was part of the American siege of British-held Boston. Some 2,300 British troops eventually cleared the hill of the entrenched Americans, but at the cost of more than 40 percent of the assault force. The battle was a moral victory for the Americans.
  - o In June 1775, the British seized Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill, which Washington and the Continental Army was preparing to bombard, but their casualties were heavy and their gains insufficient to break the Continental Army's control over Land to Boston. After this, the Americans (laid siege to Boston; no major battles were fought during this time, and the conflict was limited to occasional raids,

minor skirmishes, and sniper fire. British efforts to supply their troops were significantly impeded by the smaller but more agile Continental Army and patriot forces that were operating on land and sea. The British suffered from a continual lack of food, fuel, and supplies.

- o American militiamen approached Bunker Hill at night to build fortifications by digging trenches and raising walls. The British tried unsuccessfully to stop the colonists from their ships in the Charles River. British troops were also sent in formation to attack the militiamen. They are repelled twice by the colonists, suffering heavy casualties. By the third attempt, the American militia had run out of ammunition and were killed or captured. The British won the battle, but at a heavy cost, raising the hopes of the American colonists.
- July 2: George Washington arrives in Cambridge, Massachusetts to take command of the Continental Army.
- July 3: George Washington assumes command of the Army outside Boston
  - o Throughout that fall and winter, Washington's forces struggled to keep the British contained in Boston, but artillery captured at Fort Ticonderoga in New York helped shift the balance of that struggle in late winter. The British evacuated the city in March 1776, with Howe and his men retreating to Canada to prepare a major invasion of New York.
- July 5: One year before they would declare independence, the Second Continental Congress sent the Olive Branch Petition to England. The King refused to even look at it, and instead issued the Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition, declaring the colonies to be in "open and avowed rebellion."
- August 23: Colonies declared an "Open Rebellion"
- October 13: The U.S. Navy is established (Rhode Island)
  - o November 15: John Adams's Plan
  - o In A Letter to A Fellow Continental Congress Delegate, Adams Described the Basic Structure of What Would Become the American Government, Including the Separation of Powers: "A Legislative, An Executive and A Judicial Power, Comprehend the Whole of What Is Meant and Understood by Government." The Ideas Presented in This Letter Had a Profound Influence on The State Constitutions of Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, And Ultimately, The Federal Constitution.
- December: Black Troops petition to remain in the Army
  - o When news reaches Black troops around Boston that an act of Congress prohibits the enlistment of African Americans in the Continental Army for the coming campaign, they successfully petition George Washington to allow them to reenlist.

## 1776

- Abigail Adams writes to her husband in Congress, expressing her hope that they will declare independence from Britain. She goes on to ask that he and his fellow representatives "remember the ladies" when making new laws in an independent nation. With several colonies not receiving instructions from their governments to vote for independence, Congress passes a resolution recommending that colonies reform or replace their governments with ones that support independence. The Massachusetts

government asks inhabitants of each town to debate independence, hoping it will inspire towns in other colonies to do so and increase pressure on representatives in Congress to vote in favor of separation from Britain.

- March 4–5: Fortification of Port Dorchester Heights results in British forces evacuating Boston
- March 4: Troops from the Continental Army under George Washington’s command occupied Dorchester Heights, a series of low hills with a commanding view of Boston and its harbor, and mounted powerful cannons there threatening the city and the Navy ships in the harbor. General William Howe, commander of the British forces occupying Boston, planned an attack to dislodge them. However, after a snowstorm prevented its execution, Howe withdrew instead. British forces, accompanied by Loyalists who had fled to the city during the siege, evacuated the city on March 17 and sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- March 17: The British evacuate Boston.
  - Evacuation Day is a holiday observed on March 17 in Suffolk County.
  - The holiday commemorates the evacuation of British forces from the City of Boston following the siege of Boston, early in the American Revolutionary
  - Schools and government offices are closed. If March 17 falls on a weekend, schools and government offices are closed on the following Monday in observance. It is the same day as Saint Patrick’s Day, a coincidence that played a role in the establishment of the holiday.
  - The 11–month siege of Boston ended when the Continental Army under the command of George Washington fortified Dorchester Heights in early March 1776 with cannons captured at Ticonderoga. British General William Howe’s garrison and navy were threatened by these positions, and they were forced to decide between attack and retreat. Howe decided to retreat in order to prevent what could have been a Battle, withdrawing from Boston to Nova Scotia on March 17, 1776.
  - The British evacuation was Washington’s first victory of the war. It was also a huge morale boost for the Thirteen Colonies.
- April 4: The Continental Army departs its first winter encampment at Cambridge.
- June 7: Lee Resolution: Richard Henry Lee proposes independence to the Second Continental Congress.
- June 11 - Congress appointed a committee to produce a declaration of independence.
  - The committee includes Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Jefferson was appointed to prepare a draft of the declaration. Jefferson’s draft, with minor changes suggested by committee members, was debated in Congress on July 2 and July 3.
- **July 4: Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence**
- July 8: The Declaration of Independence is read publicly
- December 23: Thomas Paine publishes *The American Crisis*

# Addendum

Additional themes to consider for programming in communities.

## **What Does Independence Mean to You?**

Independence can be defined as being free from outside control and having individual power and autonomy. This can entail political, economic, cultural, or property independence in the United States. Independence is a privilege that many countries do not have. Though we are not the only “free” country, we acknowledge the battles fought for this privilege. However, freedom and independence are still being fought for every day. From 1775 until today, Americans of all backgrounds, ages, and nationalities have continued to fight for our freedoms.

## **Power of Place**

The state of Massachusetts is a hub of historical depth and legacy. Use your location to help materialize the stories that happened in the past. There may be a connection to the modern happenings of our place, but a connection to the history of a location is an essential and often overlooked aspect. Knowing our history allows us to be well-informed about the future. Massachusetts is a state of firsts and will continue to be as we advance in medicinal and technological areas. This theme allows us to examine how our history impacted modern happenings.

## **Unfinished Revolutions**

The fight for liberty, equality, and justice has a long and complex history in the United States and Massachusetts. The leaders of the founding era did not have all the answers. Though their innovations of representative democracy and rights-based constitutionalism were transformative, they knew the nation was a revolutionary experiment. Before, during, and after the American Revolution, people fought for their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and worked tirelessly to secure the blessings of freedom for themselves and their posterity. This history is not a consistent march of progress but a complex story of advancements and setbacks. The founders expected future generations to improve upon the republic they created. The 250th anniversary offers an opportunity to reconsider the origins of our government, democratic institutions, and broader civic life and reflect on how we have changed them over time. Encouraging discussion about our democracy and civic institutions can help strengthen understanding, inspire action, and reveal ways that all of us can participate in and shape the ongoing American experiment.

## **We The People**

Since the nation’s founding, definitions of “the people,” the boundaries of national belonging, and the very nature of citizenship have changed. For much of our history, the United States has excluded people—women, free and enslaved African Americans,

Indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, low-income people, and many others—from full participation and representation in the nation’s political, economic, and cultural life. Yet over time, the United States has also incorporated people of different backgrounds into our society, as diverse populations have staked their claim to belonging and pressed for a more pluralistic, more equitable nation. The expansion of citizenship and belonging has never been predetermined nor guaranteed, and changes in our population remain a subject of debate and conflict today.

### **Public Engagement in Massachusetts**

As one of the first colonies, Massachusetts brings great historical attention to the communities that it serves. The public can choose to visit 16 [Regional Tourism Council’s \(RTC\)](#) in Massachusetts. From the Berkshires to Central Massachusetts and the Cape and The Islands, there are ways to indulge in our history.

With 351 cities and towns to explore, Massachusetts is where the people embrace our history. Utilize your neighboring communities by working together to create tours and trails that connect your towns and historic pasts. Visiting national parks and beaches can spread awareness and experiences to new-found visitors about Massachusetts. We take pride in Massachusetts and are happy to share our history and beautiful and diverse environment.





# MA 250

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