

Orange County America 250 Partners continued their planning efforts at their most recent meeting on March 12th at the Paoli Library. CVB Executive Director Joe Lannan updated committee members on the upcoming Smithsonian Exhibit, "Voices and Votes," which will be hosted by the Orange County Convention & Visitor Bureau (CVB) in French Lick May 16-June 28. The impressive exhibit is expected to draw considerable amount of interest and attendance from not only locally but across the region. Admission to visit the exhibit will be free with several related special events planned in connection with the event. Student group visits are being especially invited to visit the display.

The county America 250 working group who has been meeting since 2024 is charged with planning events, projects, and celebrations for the county to properly mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence – July 4, 1776.

Orange County's 250 Connect Leader Robert Henderson lead a general discussion on the group's plans and projects being undertaken in observance of the upcoming special observance The group is spearheading repairs needed for the Pivot Point State Historical Marker in Paoli along with the Freeman's Corner Marker in Orleans.

Henderson also shared plans for a state-wide America 250 "Lantern Relay" with a special Revolutionary War Lantern will make its way and will be displayed in Orange County later this spring.

Plans were also discussed regarding holding a June ceremony to draw attention and rededicate the historic plaque for the French Lick Fort, located on the grounds of the French Lick Springs Resort.

Over 70 entries were received in the Orange County America 250 Student Essay Contest sponsored by the three Orange County Libraries. Winners in each community are expected to be announced very soon.

It was learned that the upcoming 2026 Orleans Dogwood Festival set for April 18-25 will revolve around the "America 250" theme.

Henderson outlined several special incentives passed down to each county from the State America 250 Commission including "Light Up United" which is slated for late spring, efforts will be undertaken across Orange County to light governmental buildings, homes, structures and markers in red, white, and blue lights, spotlights, and decorations. Lights and decorations would then stay in place through July 4th.

Declaration of Independence-On Wednesday, July 8th, the Declaration of Independence will be read across the Nation and Territories at the same time. It was on July 8, 1776, that the Declaration was first read publicly. Plans are in the works for Orange County's reading to take place from the Orange County Courthouse steps.

Roger Moon updated the group on Orange County Historical Society's "America 250" Time Capsule project. Moon said packets are now available for pickup from any of the three Orange County Libraries and that all residents are welcome and urged to participate.

In a related matter committee members noted that plans were in place for the opening of the time capsule buried on the Courthouse lawn by Paoli Jaycees in 1976 during ceremonies planned for July 4th, in Paoli.

Also planned that day will be a formal rededication of the Revolutionary War Memorial with the Lost River D.A.R. which memorializes the soldiers and patriots buried in Orange County. Recently it was discovered that seven names were invertedly left off the marker when it was first placed on the Courthouse lawn in 1940. A new plaque will be unveiled including the missing soldier's names.

Henderson also noted the ceremonies on the Courthouse lawn on the 4th will include the planting of an American Liberty Elm with a cast bronze plaque commemorating America's 250th anniversary.

Community members throughout Orange County are being encouraged to use red, white, and blue type décor as much as possible in their individual 4th of July events and displays.

Several more Community Gatherings like those staged last fall and patterned after the popular "Slices of Orange" that was held for the State's and the county's Bicentennial back in 2016 are being planned for this spring:

Northwest Township April 19th 2-4 pm at the Hindostan Community Center
Southeast Township May 3rd 1-5 at Valeene
Jackson Township May 31st 2-4 pm at the #13 School

The group's plan for the celebration also includes showcasing Orange County's storied past and rich history, its early settlers, significant residents, historic sites, museums etc. in the coming months and leading up to July 4th.

An Orange County America 250 Facebook page has been created for county residents to stay engaged and updated on the planned activities.

A special state website has been created to help keep Hoosiers engaged in the planning process [<https://www.in.gov/usa250/>]

"I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him" - Abraham Lincoln

Robert F. Henderson, Jr.
Clerk-Treasurer, Town of Orleans
Executive Director, Orleans Chamber of Commerce