



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Video: High-quality video from the announcement is [available online](#) for media outlets.

Residents and visitors invited to explore America's roots with Illinois America 250's keepsake Passport to Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – As Illinois communities prepare to celebrate the nation's semiquincentennial on July 4, the Illinois America 250 Commission today unveiled the first ever Passport to Illinois, inviting residents and visitors alike to explore the powerful places, people and events in Illinois that have shaped the nation's history.

The limited-edition keepsake [Passport to Illinois](#) uplifts untold stories of people and places that have contributed to making good on the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

Among the 56 historic sites, museums and monuments featured in the passport are the [Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial](#) and the [Elijah P. Lovejoy Monument](#) in southern Illinois; the [Western Illinois Museum](#) in Macomb; the Project XV Voting Rights Museum in El Paso; the [Ulysses S. Grant Home](#) in Galena; the [Jacksonville African American History Museum and Woodlawn Farm](#) and the [McLean County Museum of History](#) in central Illinois; the [Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum](#) and the [Radium Girls Monument](#) in northern Illinois; and the [National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture](#) and the [Jane Addams Hull-House Museum](#) in Chicago.

"The first-ever Passport to Illinois transforms travel into a journey through the very ideals that built our nation. It is an invitation for visitors to Illinois and residents alike to explore history, heritage and the communities that define Illinois today," said **Gabrielle Lyon, chair of the Illinois America 250 Commission** and executive director of Illinois Humanities. "We're launching the passport just in time for families planning their spring break and summer vacations. It's a perfect, hands-on way to connect with our country's 250th milestone anniversary."

Passports are free and will be available at public libraries, highway visitor centers, staffed passport sites and other locations throughout Illinois while supplies last. Pickup locations will be highlighted on the [Illinois America 250 website](#). In addition, a digital version of the passport will be available to download from the site and print at home.

"Illinois America 250 is a wonderful opportunity to invite residents and travelers to experience all that our great state has to offer," said **Catie Sheehan, deputy director of the DCEO Illinois Office of Tourism**. "The Passport to Illinois encourages everyone to explore communities across the state while celebrating the people, places and stories that have shaped our nation. More than a guide, this passport becomes a travel journal and keepsake, capturing memories, reflections, and connections, while supporting local destinations and tourism economies statewide."

The [Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum](#) in Springfield is among the stops featured on the passport.

"The point of commemorating America's 250th birthday is not simply to celebrate where we are today. It's also to consider where we want to go tomorrow. That's exactly what Abraham Lincoln did when he urged Americans to dedicate themselves to a freedom movement that had begun 'four score and seven years ago'," said **Christina**

Shutt, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and a member of the Illinois America 250 Commission. “I hope everyone who uses this passport to explore history will also think about ways they can make America a better place for all.”

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) manages some of the state’s most meaningful historic sites, many of which are featured on the passport, including [Lincoln’s New Salem](#) in Menard County, the [Old State Capitol](#) in Springfield, [Black Hawk State Historic Site](#) in Rock Island, [Cahokia Mounds](#) near Collinsville, and the [Vandalia Statehouse](#) in Fayette County.

“The Passport to Illinois offers a trove of ideas for families and individuals who wish to explore our state and national history during this special anniversary year and beyond,” said **IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie**. “Our staff is excited to welcome new and returning visitors at the state historic sites and parks featured in the passport.”

The passport cover features a cardinal, a monarch and other state symbols. The artwork is by **artist William Estrada**, who grew up in California, Mexico and Chicago.

“As we near America’s 250th birthday, it’s important to remember Illinois’ role in the country’s foundation,” said **State Senator Doris Turner of Springfield**, who is also an Illinois America 250 Commission member. “The passports will share stories and highlight the many people, places and things that make Illinois what it is today.”

The passport was developed by the Illinois America 250 Commission in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Office of Tourism, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Humanities, the Illinois Association of Museums, the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Passport to Illinois is one of a series of signature initiatives organized by Illinois America 250 Commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The commission was established to lead an inclusive, statewide celebration that uplifts local stories, highlights significant places and programs, and showcases how Illinoisans bring the ideals of the Declaration of Independence to life.

Other signature programs include:

- **Illinois United in Service**, an effort to encourage residents to volunteer with organizations of their choice and [log their hours with Serve Illinois](#) to foster community connection and build a legacy of giving back throughout 2026.
- **Illinois Voices 250**, a project to record and preserve Illinoisans’ reflections on the 250th anniversary in the Library of Congress. More information will be announced on this initiative soon.

Communities throughout Illinois are planning [local and regional events](#) to commemorate the anniversary.

The official hub for Illinois America 250 can be found online at [il250.org](#). There, Illinoisans can sign up to be a 250th partner; browse or submit events; access free educational and planning resources for schools, libraries, families and organizations; learn about or join local 250th communities and partners; and get updates on news and volunteer opportunities connected to Illinois America 250. Illinoisans who want to get involved in events near them can visit the community calendar at [il250.org/events](#).

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