



Historic locales *across the* United States

Americans will celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States in 2026. A semiquincentennial is a notable anniversary, and there's been no shortage of noteworthy events throughout United States history. The places where many of those events took place have been preserved by local and national historical societies, and visiting such sites can make for a great way to gain a greater understanding of American history. The National Trust for Historic Preservation® works to maintain and revitalize historic sites, and that boasts a number of benefits. History buffs may insist there's no experience quite like visiting a historic site and feeling an immediate connection to past eras and peoples. And such sites also provide a boost to local economies while helping to establish a shared sense of civic duty and belonging, which ultimately helps to build strong communities. With so much to gain from visiting historic locales, those celebrating 250 years of the United States can visit any of these sites across the country to bolster those celebrations.

• Historic Rural Schoolhouses of Montana, Montana:

The National Trust notes that each of Montana's 56 counties still features at least one rural schoolhouse, many of which are one- or two-room buildings where generations of school-aged children were educated. A visit to one of these schoolhouses provides incredible context to what life in the state of Montana was like in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



America *then and now*

Celebrations of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States of America will unfold throughout 2026. As millions join in the festivities, it can be fun to compare the nation in its infancy to the one that has since firmly established itself as a global leader.

Population

- **1780:** 2.8 million*
- **2025:** 342 million**

* The National Archives note that the first decennial census of the United States was not taken until 1790, so the figure cited for 1780 is a widely accepted estimate of the burgeoning nation's population during the opening years of the American Revolutionary War.

** This represents the U.S. Census Bureau population estimate as of late 2025.

States

According to the National Constitution Center, a series of resolutions passed by the Second Continental Congress in September 1776 officially cited the collective colonies fighting in the American Revolutionary War as the "United States."

- **1776:** 13
- **2026:** 50

Income taxes • 1776: 0%

Debates regarding income taxes may seem like an ever-present component of American life, but colonists did not pay income tax in 1776. Though taxation was undeniably a notable issue throughout colonial America, the Tax Foundation notes the situation was considerably different in 1776 than it is today, when taxes are a highly debated component of American life. In 1776, the British Crown relied on tariffs and excise taxes to fund the American colonies, whereas modern Americans pay federal and, in most states, state income taxes to finance a range of public goods and services.

Land mass

- **1783:** 800,000 sq miles
- **2026:** just under 3.6 million sq miles

The Times Atlas of World History indicates that the United States had an area of approximately 800,000 square miles in 1783. The country is considerably larger today, with a rough land mass of just under 3.6 million square miles according to the U.S. Census Bureau. To put that expansion since the nascent days of the nation in perspective, today the combined land mass of the country's two largest states eclipses the land mass of the entire nation in the early 1780s. Alaska (estimated land mass 571,000 square miles) and Texas (262,000), with roughly 833,000 square miles between them, are larger than the total land mass of the United States in 1783.

Transportation

- **Late eighteenth century:** Horses
- **2025:** 298.7 million registered vehicles

The Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress notes that walking was the most common and cheapest mode of transportation in the late eighteenth century. Horses and wagons enabled business and distance travel, but such modes were only available to those who could afford it, greatly limiting who could get around by any means other than their own feet. Getting around in the present day is a little more accessible, and a recent analysis from Hedges & Company found there were 298.7 million registered vehicles in the U.S. in 2025.