Burke County

America 250 Committee

Activity & Final Report
October 2, 2026

Overview

Burke County's America 250 Committee organized and supported numerous events throughout 2025 and 2026 to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary. These activities celebrated our history, encouraged public participation, and promoted an appreciation of our nation's founding.

Despite challenges involving limited organizational cooperation and a politically divided national climate, the committee successfully delivered meaningful programs and helped generate record attendance at several community events.

Major Projects and Accomplishments

1. Revolutionary War Encampment – September 27, 2025
More than 40 vendors and historical interpreters recreated life in the 1700s at the Charles McDowell House. Nearly 1,000 visitors from North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina attended. Record participation required expanded parking and shuttle transportation.

2. Historic Site Tour – September 26, 2025
Forty participants purchased $30 tickets for guided visits to historic Burke County properties not normally open to the public. Visitors traveled from as far away as Fayetteville.

3. Morganton Christmas Parade – 2025
The committee led the parade alongside SAR and DAR members. The committee's suggestion of a historical theme helped inspire the parade's "Christmas Through the Ages" celebration.

4. America 250 Flag Design Contest – 2026
Burke County fourth graders were invited to design commemorative flags, with local winners selected for recognition and participation in the statewide competition.

5. Liberty Tree Dedication – May 8, 2026
A Liberty Tree was planted and dedicated at Morganton's Freedom Park, with approximately 75 people attending the ceremony.

6. Fourth of July Celebration – 2026
The committee endorsed the Glen Alpine Fourth of July Parade as Burke County's official America 250 parade. Longtime residents and elected officials reported record participation by parade entries and spectators.

7. Burke County Time Capsule – October 2, 2026
A commemorative time capsule was dedicated and placed in the protective custody of the Burke County Register of Deeds. It will remain on display in the Register of Deeds office until its scheduled opening in 2076.

8. Colonial Photo Booth
An interactive photo booth featuring colonial clothing, historical props, and a three-dimensional backdrop was created for educational activities and public events.

Public Participation and Community Challenges

America 250 activities generated substantial public interest, increased media coverage, and record participation at several events. Families, students, and visitors from throughout the region participated in Burke County's historical celebrations.

However, cooperation among local organizations was challenging. Despite considerable outreach, participation was limited, and some organizations continued to operate independently, occasionally scheduling competing events. Greater coordination would have strengthened the countywide celebration.

The nation's political divisions also influenced the atmosphere surrounding America 250. An anniversary intended to unite Americans around their shared history sometimes encountered differing political perspectives and interpretations of patriotism.

Nevertheless, the committee remained focused on its nonpartisan mission: **commemorating America's founding, recognizing our shared heritage, and encouraging appreciation of the freedoms and responsibilities of citizenship.**

The public experienced successful celebrations, patriotic displays, historical programs, and opportunities to reflect on 250 years of American history.

Role of the Burke County Tourism Development Authority

The Burke County Tourism Development Authority provided the primary staffing, administrative support, and coordination for the America 250 Committee.

The Burke Visitor Center served as the committee's headquarters, hosting meetings, storing time capsule materials, distributing information, and responding to public inquiries. TDA staff became the central resource for America 250 activities throughout Burke County.

Conclusion

Burke County's America 250 commemoration achieved its principal objective of recognizing this historic national milestone through educational programs, community celebrations, and lasting commemorative projects.

While political divisions and limited participation among some organizations presented challenges, strong public involvement demonstrated continued interest in our nation's history.

The lasting legacy of America 250 in Burke County is a reminder that our shared American history belongs to everyone, regardless of political differences, and that the ideals of liberty, citizenship, and community remain worthy of celebration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ed Phillips, Chair

America 250 NC Burke County