



Vermont 250th Community Planning Grants Final Report from the Vermont Historical Society April 2026

In Fall 2023, the Vermont Historical Society (VHS) working with the Vermont 250th Commission and Vermont Covered, launched the Vermont 250th Community Planning Grants program.

Grant applications were collected in a multitude of rounds through July 2024. In total, 35 applications were received over the course of the funding rounds. 30 applications were approved, with 25 organizations completing the requirements to receive the funding in alignment with the original \$25,000 available for these grants.

Grant funded projects/activities were supposed to be completed by the end of September 2025. Numerous organizations requested an extension through the end of the calendar year 2025. In April 2026 final reports had all been received.

The grantees undertook a range of activities and programs with the granted funds. Everything from talks to bus tours to exhibits. Numerous groups used funding to help with larger projects- such as creating a community garden, or starting work on restoring the town bandstand. Many involved numerous partner organizations and other groups in their work, indicating a true community commitment to the activities.

Grantees indicated in aggregate that over 8,500 people so far participated in project activities funded by these grants. This ranged from a small number that worked on planning activities to thousands that visited exhibits. Additional anticipated attendees for planned 250th related activities taking place in 2026 were also noted by a number of the groups.

The vast majority of grantees were able to accomplish the goals or activities originally outlined in the grant. Many will be continuing the work or starting new 250th projects into 2026. Few negative impacts were mentioned, but ones that were mentioned included time (lack of), learning new technology, and less than desirable weather. Some grantees also expressed “difficulty” in spending the grant money, as many were small organizations or community groups that often work on shoe-string budgets.

We continued to receive inquiries after the last funding deadline about the possibility/desire for additional funding, as more communities built awareness and desire around the 250th commemoration. Some grantees mentioned receiving other funding already from Vermont Humanities, local groups, or private donors for continued activities, but there is no doubt that additional funding would have been welcome. This is especially true for smaller groups/communities who were looking for just a few hundred dollars to pay for things like speaker fees, historic markers, or event rentals.

Expenditures

Grant funds were spent on a variety of items in planning and presenting associated programs. Generalized expense categories included:

- Arts/Cultural expenses (performances, movies, musicians, speakers)
- Rentals (spaces, equipment)
- Printing & copying
- Refreshments/Food
- Software & Technology (website creation/hosting, recording equipment)
- Exhibit Supplies
- Staff & Consultant Time
- Advertising
- Plants & Landscaping
- Signage & Markers

While some organizations expressed “difficulty” in deciding how to spend the grant funds, with final reporting most grantees showed that the grant funds were ultimately just one part of a larger budget for much of the work they were doing. Other sources of funding that were indicated included other grants, community or foundation donations, municipal support, and in-kind donations.

Selected Relevant & Informative Comments from Final Reports

- The website ensures lasting public access to historical resources well beyond the anniversary. The grant's flexibility enabled us to build community partnerships and develop sustainable programming that honors our town's role in Vermont's founding. (Pomfret)
- We feel thankful and fortunate for the resources that we encountered and the information and tools that we were able to work with. It has been a valuable learning experience in community that we strongly feel is necessary to share and continue building... Knowledge of history is a community strengthening experience. (Woodbury)
- Thank you for the grant that enabled us to put so much thought and creativity into planning for a series of events for our community! (Newbury)
- The exhibit was well received, proved to be a community building and awareness resource, and even spurred further exhibits and programs...We are most appreciative of being able to take advantage of these grant funds for this exhibit, community collaboration, programming, and awareness. We would not have been able to do this otherwise. (Lincoln)
- This has been a challenge, but we consider it an ongoing project (Weathersfield)
- Each of the 250th programs and/or projects completed to date and documented in this report exceeded expectations of community interest and involvement. (Danville)

250th Planning Grantees (Primary Applicant)
Brookfield Historical Society
Danville Vermont Historical Society
Ethan Allen Homestead Museum
Ethan and Mary Baker Allen Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Vermont Chapter of NSDAR
Fair Haven Historical Society
Fairfield Historical Society
Franklin Historical Society
Guilford Historical Society
Hartford Historical Society
Henry Sheldon Museum
Jamaica Historical Foundation
Lincoln Historical Society
Orwell Historical Society
Pownal Historical Society, Inc
Sunderland 250 Commemoration Committee
Town of Bennington
Town of Newbury
Town of Pomfret, Vermont 250th Anniversary Committee
Town of Wilmington
Tunbridge Historical Society
Weathersfield Proctor Library
Whiting Library
Woodbury Community Library
Woodstock History Center
Worcester, Vermont Historical Society

Below are brief descriptions of the project activities funded by these grants.

Brookfield Historical Society

We used the funds to replace the headstone of Judith Lynde in the Brookfield Old Cemetery. Judith and her husband John, both of African American descent, moved to Brookfield in 1793. John was part of the Connecticut State Militia during the Revolutionary War and served in the Battle of Saratoga in New York State. The two owned a farm in Brookfield and lived here until their deaths. Judith's original headstone had crumbled decades ago and was replaced with a flat stone containing inaccurate dates. As part of our 250th focus on the theme of mending, we chose to use our funding to replace Judith's headstone with a free-standing and accurate stone.

This will tie into future events in the next year including a talk about the Lyndes by local historian Sue Nevins.

Danville Historical Society

The Danville Historical Society undertook a number of programs in 2025 related to the 250th. This included a "Patriots in Petticoats" program on women in the American Revolution, a talk on counterfeiter "Bristol Bill", participation in the Vermont Sampler Driving Tour, an "Adopt a Patriot" program for cemetery markers in North Danville, a celebration of Old North Church Old Home Day, a display of Rev War materials during the annual Danville Community Fair, an unveiling ceremony for a new portrait of Col. Addison W. Preston, and continued work on the restoration of the Danville train station.

Ethan and Mary Baker Allen Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Vermont Chapter of NSDAR

Phase 1 of the Never Forget Garden was completed. Local landscaper, Joan Lynch, was engaged to install the garden. The first open house was held on November 9th to celebrate the completion of the laying of the bricks.

Ethan Allen Homestead Museum

The grant supported the commission of custom art pieces for the new exhibit, "Voices of the Revolution: War on the Northern Frontier". The exhibit focuses on the Revolutionary War experiences of seven diverse historical figures whose stories have been mostly untold before now. Their stories are interpreted by local artists through custom pieces in the exhibit, including visual art, costume art, and sound art. The exhibit opened on May 1, 2025 and has so far been viewed by 4,488 museum visitors.

Fair Haven Historical Society

In January 2025, John Daly performed songs about Matthew Lyon. They published a booklet about Lyon and had a display about him, including two informational posters and his portrait. In May, members of the Society's Board of Directors made presentations about Matthew Lyon to fourth grade students at the Fair Haven Grade School. The presentations included interactive stations about his grist mill and waterworks, a diorama about his gift of park land to the Town, and an oral presentation about his life. They also had a float in the Fair Haven Memorial Day parade featuring John Daly in Matthew Lyon's jail.

Fairfield Historical Society

Fabricated a "Marietta Ball" commemorative plaque. We met with community members at her grave on anniversary of her death, and also held a joint presentation at the Saint Albans Museum. An author spoke on the murder and answered questions, and the plaque was displayed at the museum.

Franklin Historical Society

Created an outline of the activities planned for the 250th celebration in July of 2026. These activities include a day-long music event showcasing local musical talent. The event is planned to take place on the town bandstand. In order for this to happen, the bandstand, which is in poor condition, will need to be rebuilt. Our activities included procuring detailed plans for the new bandstand and hiring a local contractor to begin the work. This project will also bring the bandstand into ADA compliance."

Guilford Historical Society

We produced a fantastic community screening of ""Lost Nation"" with film director Jay Craven. Over 110 people participated, including a historical discussion of Guilford history and its connections to the theme of the film. We also formed a working group, coming out of the film, to further develop a permanent exhibit about Lucy Terry Prince at the Guilford Historical Museum.

Hartford Historical Society- Town of Hartford

The Hartford 250th Commemoration Committee helped plan a number of programs in conjunction with many community partner organizations and groups. This included a Hartford Historical Society presentation on "The Navy and the Marines in the Revolutionary War," Hartford Library Summer Reading program activities, a Hartford Historical Society presentation on "Interpreting Historical Interpreting: The Evolution of Revolutionary War Reenacting", a Hartford Library presentation on "Colonial Fashion", the White River Junction Block Party, Hosting Hartford Venture Camping groups and activities related to the Rev War era, Working with the Bugbee Senior Center on a 1000-piece puzzle of the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence to be framed and hung at the Center as art, an Abenaki Garden Open House, and a Family Country Dance.

Henry Sheldon Museum

The Henry Sheldon Museum partnered with curriculum specialist, Devin Winer, to develop an artifact analysis lesson plan for grades 3-6 students to examine primary sources (objects and archives) at the Henry Sheldon Museum related to the 250th anniversary of the United States. This lesson plan will be used in 2026-2027, in conjunction with our upcoming exhibit, Remembering the American Revolution, 1776 - 2026, where these artifacts will be on view.

Jamaica Historical Foundation

Jamaica Historical Foundation launched on Jamaica Day 8/17/24 a multi-year celebration to engage our community to "put themselves in Jamaica's history." The town was founded in 1780 and JHF's self-guided walking tour highlights 40 sites around the village with signs noting historical context for homes and businesses. Costumed interpreters were also on hand to provide additional stories and info. This event boasted two music stages, 12 vendors, speakers including Coffin, elder cane presentation, children's games, demonstrations, a quilt exhibit, pet-a-trucks, and food.

Lincoln Historical Society

The Lincoln Historical Society produced and mounted an exhibit titled, *Lincoln's Lincoln: A Revolutionary Hero and the Sword that Made America*, which highlights the 1780 charter of Lincoln, Vermont and how the town came to be named for Revolutionary War Major General Benjamin Lincoln. Visitors witnessed the scope of American Independence through one of George Washington's most trusted commanders, from the events leading up to the Revolutionary War through the Battles of Bennington, Saratoga, Charleston, and Yorktown. Students from the Lincoln Community School participated in the exhibit and created exhibit content. The Lincoln Library was also a partner, with the exhibit premiering at the Library March through May, then moving to the LHS museum June through October. Programs were also part of the activities, such as talks on Herbal Remedies During the Revolutionary Era.

Orwell Historical Society

As the OHS Museum remained closed due to ongoing needs for inventory and assessment,

activities were centered about the Orwell Free Library and included support for the Orwell Artists 10th Anniversary Show, a speaker series, and a History Club for students.

Pownal Historical Society

On May 3, 2025 the Pownal Historical held a reenactment of the recruitment of volunteers in period costumes by the Green Mountain Boys on their way up to Fort Ticonderoga and on to Crown Point. We had fiddle & banjo music, refreshments, and a fife for the flag raising. Approximately 75 people participated which made the Event a great hit.

Sunderland 250 Commemoration Committee

We co-sponsored a re-enactor event staged with the Manchester Community Library. Here's a description of it: "In Time" is a Live History event where audience members follow their own chosen path in order to complete missions, tasks, clues and speak to the characters. Actors portraying Jonas Fay, General Christopher Roberts, Ira Allen, and Judge Mark T. Skinner spent the day in the Manchester Community Library greeting and chatting with patrons and students as they wind their way through the building immersing themselves in social history. This is an open event that allows participants to arrive in 15 minute intervals and wander the halls of history speaking to the Northshire's most influential Revolutionary characters while participating in a scavenger hunt for history.

Town of Bennington

Two days of field trips for 187 grade 4 students provided a 'deep dive' into history using historic sites in Old Bennington. Students had a two hour experience visiting the Bennington Museum, the Old First Church, Centre Cemetery, and the Bennington Battle Monument. Students also visited the Catamount Tavern monument where a re-enactment of the meeting of Ed Mott of CT and Ethan Allen of the grants took place to plan the capture of Fort Ticonderoga.

Town of Newbury

A working group was formed. This planning group met approximately every other month through 2025 and developed a calendar of events hosted by participating organizations and citizen groups for 2026 festivities to celebrate the 250th anniversary for the founding of America. They also identified some specific projects to celebrate during these events - including the re-creation of a 1770s American flag made from materials produced locally in Newbury and crafted at the Newbury Weaving School; the planting of crab apple trees throughout the Town as part of a 2026 Arbor Day effort; historical re-enactments and presentations on daily life in the 1770s by the Newbury Conservation Commission and the Oxbow Chapter of DAR; and presentations on community resilience from the 1770s through the present by the Newbury Historical Society. The group has recently retained a graphic designer to develop posters and advertising for the events planned through 2026. These will be completed in November/December of this year, and will begin being placed in December in local newspapers, list serves, and community bulletin boards and kiosks.

Town of Pomfret, 250th Anniversary Committee

The Committee focused on building digital infrastructure and planning commemorative programming:. This included website development, organizing a historical contra dance, developing plans for 250th anniversary displays, purchasing recording equipment and scheduling video interviews with longtime Pomfret residents, developing preliminary designs for a permanent monument honoring Pomfret residents who served from the Revolutionary War through present day, and establishing collaborations in the community for 2026 programming.

Tunbridge Historical Society

We ran a bus tour of 18th century Tunbridge where we visited seven different sites in town connected with aspects of early Tunbridge. Three of the sites had costumed interpreters portraying some of those early people.

Vermont 250 - Wilmington

Printing of brochures, flyers, and Catamount Chronicles to market upcoming programs & celebrations for the 250th. Sponsored 40th Vermont National Guard Band called Iron Sights and Ira Allen talk by Kevin Graffagnino. Created a display at the Historical Society of Wilmington and promoted the forming of a committee via press releases, article in the Historical Society's newsletter, and in the Deerfield Valley News. Created a dedicated space to Vermont 250th on the Town of Wilmington website.

Weathersfield Proctor Library

The Library and Historical Society created a 250 group. Based on our local Articles of Association (1775) and how they were voted on, we researched the history of the participants. Next, one of our members, Patti Arrison wrote a play titled 'We Most Ardently Desire' which has gone through several drafts. A group of men and women were then recruited to perform the play at the Historical Society annual meeting. A book will be published that will include the play, the history of the event, and will include the original Articles of Association.

Whiting Library

We purchased three different scanners for the library and public use, and we scheduled several open houses for patrons to drop in and see the equipment. We had one training session for patrons and representatives of the Chester Historical Society, which plans on using these scanners to digitize their collection.

Woodbury Community Library

The Woodbury Community Library organized a committee to address four different areas of research. This group of five individuals conducted research, digitized records, conducted interviews, visited sites and provided summaries of their progress during scheduled meetings. This included creating Two Generations of Veterans in Woodbury: Notes and Bibliography on Comfort and William Wheeler by Kymberly Winchell; History of the Shao Shan temple in Woodbury by Tepin Delaney, digitization of photographs & records on the granite industry in Woodbury; and projects on Woodbury Church Histories and Woodbury School Histories by Elisha Renne.

Woodstock History Center

The outline of the publication on town history has been developed and large portions of the text have been created with accompanying images. The layout of the book has started with over thirty-six pages being designed to by early summer 2025.

Worcester, Vermont Historical Society

An RFP was sent to area artists to submit an original art project that focused on some event or idea inherit to the beginnings or values of our nation that might help to foster a promising future. The proposals were evaluated at the 2024 Worcester Arts Festival (WAF) and four artists were selected and given a \$250 stipend each to complete their work for the 2025 WAF.