

# THE ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

On Dec. 3, 1818, President James Monroe signed legislation that made Illinois the 21st state in the Union. Now, almost 200 years later, Illinoisans are celebrating this great milestone with a yearlong celebration. Planning for the Bicentennial celebration has been years in the making and is being lead in large part by the Illinois Bicentennial Commission.

In August 2017, the commission began its 100-day countdown to the kickoff of the yearlong Bicentennial celebration by hosting events in Kaskaskia (the first state capital) and Randolph County. Kickoff events for the celebration were held by the Bicentennial Commission on Dec. 3, 2017, at locations including Navy Pier in Chicago and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. On Dec. 4, 2017, units of local government throughout the state held flag-raising ceremonies using the Bicentennial flag created by the commission.

The Bicentennial Commission has endorsed Bicentennial projects throughout the state and developed an events calendar. Working with partners, the commission plans to execute the following:

- Create a Bicentennial Road Scholars Speakers Bureau.
- Develop a Bicentennial educational curriculum for grades K-12.
- Honor Illinois' veterans throughout the Bicentennial year.
- Assist in the creation of a permanent exhibit in Springfield to commemorate the founding of the nation's first National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter.

The commission has planned several signature events throughout 2018, culminating with a gala celebration at the United Center in Chicago on Dec. 3, 2018. Other projects include the rehabilitation of the Governor's Mansion in Springfield and the dedication of a Bicentennial Plaza at the headquarters of the Illinois Association of Realtors in Springfield.

A goal of the commission includes assisting local government agencies, businesses and nonprofit organizations in their endeavors to promote and celebrate the Bicentennial by awarding grants, as well as formally endorsing events as part of the official Illinois Bicentennial celebration.

For additional information about the Illinois Bicentennial Commission, visit <https://illinois200.com>.

The Secretary of State's office is also participating in the Bicentennial. The Secretary of State serves as the State Librarian and the State Archivist, and many of the office's contributions to the Bicentennial reflect those functions of the office. Specifically, the office has achieved the following:

- Issued a special edition of the *Illinois Blue Book*, the official handbook of state government.

- Furnished a commemorative edition of the *Illinois Blue Book* to each public library in Illinois.
- Created a Book of the Month reading program for 2018, featuring books written about Illinois by Illinois authors.
- Updated the Illinois Authors map for distribution to Illinois libraries and schools.
- Established an online exhibit entitled “The 100 Most Important Historic Documents in the Illinois State Archives.”
- Assisted the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in creating a special Bicentennial exhibit at the museum, which will be featured throughout 2018.
- Promoted Bicentennial celebrations in newsletters, with articles and through social media.

From Lincoln to Obama, from Chicago to Cairo, from industry and business to corn and coal, we are a diverse and wonderful state with a proud history and a bright future. The Bicentennial offers us the chance to remember our story and honor those who came before us. It also offers us the opportunity to recommit ourselves to making Illinois the greatest state in the Union. Let the celebrations begin.



## Illinois Bicentennial Seal

---

The Illinois Bicentennial flag flies under the U.S and Illinois flags at the Capitol Complex. On Dec. 4, 2017, government offices throughout Illinois simultaneously raised the Bicentennial flag at ceremonies to kick off the yearlong celebration of Illinois’ 200th birthday. The flag will fly throughout 2018 — Illinois’ Bicentennial year.