



Celebrating the Semiquincentennial in Annapolis

[Joe Nathanson](#)//March 27, 2026//

As a special anniversary approaches, Americans are marking the occasion in a variety of interesting and imaginative ways. The anniversary is the 250th year since we declared our independence from Great Britain under the rule of King George III.

My professional organization, Lambda Alpha International, the land economics society, has taken up this celebration in a big way. With chapters up and down the Eastern time zone, from Georgia and Florida on north to Boston, we have arranged many events to mark the semiquincentennial, or SemiQ for short.

Our Baltimore chapter recognized that this region played a unique role in the story of our independence and centered our commemorative efforts in [Annapolis](#), the colonial capital that helped shape that [history](#). Many chapter members along with visitors from other chapters, about 60 in all, recently gathered at the Banneker-Douglass-Tubman museum to listen to speakers and hear special presentations about Annapolis' storied past and dynamic present.

We heard welcoming remarks from the city's newly minted mayor, Jared Littmann, and historical context from Thomas Guay, the author of Chesapeake Bound. Another dimension of the city's history was offered by Chris Haley, representing the Kunta Kinte – Alex Haley Memorial, as well as his family. Chris is the nephew of Alex Haley, the acclaimed author of Roots, the basis of the 1977 television series of the same name. A memorial statue recognizing Kunta Kinte, an enslaved person brought here in 1763, and the role of the late author in bringing that story to life, is to be found on the city's waterfront.

The immediate challenges of today's Annapolis were presented by Eileen Fogarty, a former director of the city's planning department and now the person in charge of the City Dock project. This initiative, designed to create new parkland and other amenities while also working to mitigate the ongoing threats of coastal flooding, recently received some good news. We learned that a hoped-for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant of \$35.5 million had finally been awarded.

The analytic tools that are now being employed to guide future development were described by the city's current Chief of Comprehensive Planning, Eric Leshinsky, whose presentation rounded out the morning program.

Following lunch, guided by "squires" dressed in colonial garb, we ventured forth into the town described as a "museum without walls." A short walk from the actual museum brought us to the Maryland State House, the oldest state capitol in continuous legislative use in the United States. From November 1783 to August 1784 Annapolis was serving as the capital of the new nation. In fact, since the Treaty of Paris was ratified by the Continental Congress in January 1784, formally ending the hostilities with Great Britain, Annapolis became this country's first peacetime capital.

Another notable, indeed emotional, event took place in the State House on December 23, 1783. It was then that General George Washington, commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, submitted his formal resignation and ceded control to the new nation's civilian leaders, establishing a precedent for our republic.

Leaving the capitol building, our group had the opportunity to take a hard-hat tour to see the construction progress underway at City Dock. A planned walking tour of the U. S. Naval Academy had to be cancelled due to the ongoing military conflict in the Middle East.

To conclude our afternoon activities, we headed to the William Paca House and Garden. Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, one of four Annapolitans to serve in that role, built this Georgian mansion between 1763 and 1765. Here we had a chance to enjoy some food and drink as well as to reflect on all we heard and saw during the course of the day.

The formal program at the Paca House concluded with words from Jefferson Holland, the Poet Laureate of Annapolis. His closing lines, in part, read:

Let Annapolis show the world how democracy is done –
With justice, not with vengeance —
With the truth, not outright lies –
With good sense and consensus –
With the facts, not alibis –
With idealism, not idolatry –
With compassion, not derision –
With intelligence, not idiocy –
With communion, not division.

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