

# Gateway to 250: Missouri and the Making of America

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## Introduction

On the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United States, we at Wornall/Majors House museums want to tell the story of America from the perspective of Missouri.

Through this project, we hope to promote collaboration, help Missourians have opportunities to interact with humanities scholars and experts, encourage connection between the open exchange and exploration of ideas, promote active participation in community life, and expand understanding of Missouri culture.

We are excited to initiate this project as part of our mission to steward, interpret, and preserve history so that it is accessible and inclusive to all. This contest is open to all ages and levels of expertise! We welcome high school students, college students, graduate students, and senior citizens.

Wornall/Majors House Museums have identified six topics that narrate the story of America through Missourian perspectives. Within these topics, we want your work to highlight unique and specific histories.

The six subject categories are listed below:

1. Indigenous Peoples in Missouri
2. Frontier Life in Early Missouri
3. Missouri v. Kansas: Border War
4. Enslavement in Missouri
5. Frontier Frontline: Civil War in Missouri
6. Rebuilding: Reconstruction in Missouri
- + 7. Creative Work (written or visual)

More information about these topics can be found in the Subject Descriptions section.

## How to Submit

To submit your work, please email a PDF version to [jberry@wornallmajors.org](mailto:jberry@wornallmajors.org).

## Prizes

All seven category winners will receive \$200 each upon selection. All six essay winners will receive an additional \$100 upon presentation of their work at one of the historical events.

## Project Phases

This project will go through five phases of development, explained below. We want to work with community members to enhance their research as well as make it accessible to the rest of the public.

## Submissions

The submission deadline for all essays and creative works is December 1, 2025. We encourage writers to submit their works early. Works submitted after 11:59 on December 1 will not be accepted.

To submit your work, please email your essay or creative work in PDF form to [jberry@wornallmajors.org](mailto:jberry@wornallmajors.org).

## Judging

Judging of the submissions will take place in early December. Each work will be read by a panel of experts and evaluated based on the published rubric.

Decisions will be published on December 15, 2025. All submissions will receive feedback on their submissions via the rubric whether or not they are selected.

## Revisions

The seven selected works will go through a revision process. This process will begin as soon as the winners are announced. Any necessary edits to the text will be made during this time and the layout of the booklet will be developed. Subject matter experts will advise on the content.

## Publishing

The booklet will be sent to the printer in February and then mailed to museum supporters as well as made available at both the John Wornall House and the Alexander Majors House. Winners will receive a complimentary copy of the magazine.

## Presenting/Events

After the magazine is published, six events will be organized, each dedicated to one of the essay topics selected for publication. These events will include activities, special signage, and presentations from contest winners, providing a platform for the public to learn and interact. Contest winners will engage attendees in conversations about their research while museum staff will provide exhibit signage and organize activities to enhance participants' experiences.

### Projected Timeline of Events:

April 2026– Indigenous People of Missouri

May 2026– Frontier Life in Early Missouri

June 2026– Enslavement in Missouri

July 2026– Missouri v. Kansas: Border War

August 2026– Frontier Frontline: Civil War in Missouri

September 2026– Rebuilding: Reconstruction in Missouri

\*The timeline of events may be adjusted due to scheduling conflicts or availability of participants.

# General Guidelines

## Deadlines

Submission Deadline: December 1, 2025

Decisions Released: December 15, 2025

## Choosing a Topic

Writers are encouraged to choose niche topics within the six outlined categories. We are looking for essays that provide exciting original research grounded in primary sources rather than historical overviews of these topics.

We are interested in stories of Missourians through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Topic choices should adhere as closely to the subject category as possible.

You can find more information about the six categories, including short descriptions and example topics, in the Subject Descriptions document.

## Word Count

Recommended essay length is between 1500-2000 words, not including citations.

Maximum length is 2500 words.

## Works Cited/Bibliography

All submissions must have an attached works cited page containing any relevant citations and sources referenced. Works cited pages will not be published, so any crucial references should be included in-text.

## Images

Writers are encouraged to submit public domain photo(s) with accompanying caption(s) along with their essay, but images are not a criterion for judging. If photos are included, they must be accompanied by a link, description, and date. Any included images must not be subject to copyright and must be available for reprint.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions Document for information not listed here.

Please email [jberry@wornallmajors.org](mailto:jberry@wornallmajors.org) for all other questions.

## Subject Descriptions

Within each of these categories, we are interested in rigorous original research that deepens our understanding of these topics. While there are many sources that provide a general overview of the following subjects, we are interested in deep dives and niche topics. Remember, we are looking for work that does more than just provide a historical summary of these events.

Wornall/Majors House Museums is a public history institution. We serve many different publics and so the works we publish should be accessible to the general public, not just scholars!

### Indigenous Peoples in Missouri

The land that is now known as the state of Missouri holds cultural significance for many Native peoples, including the Osage, Otoe-Missouria, Sauk and Fox, Ioway, Kansa (Kaw), Illini, Kickapoo, Peoria, Shawnee, Delaware, Sioux, Piankashaw, and Cherokee.

We are ever mindful that these peoples continue a sacred relationship with the lands we occupy, and we recognize their integral contributions to the cultural heritage of this state and to our nation's history.

While there are currently no federally recognized tribes in Missouri, the stories of the indigenous people who lived here are, and always have been, part of Missouri's history. The nations that are currently represented in Missouri are often not the tribes that would originally have lived on this land. We are interested in works that tell the stories of indigenous peoples in Missouri through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whether they originated here or not.

Example areas of scholarship in this category are: Early colonial interactions with indigenous peoples, Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Trail of Tears), the Shawnee Indian Mission, and the history and culture of individual tribes.

### Frontier Life in Early Missouri

Submissions in this category should seek to reveal what life was like for early Missourians on the frontier. The land now known as the state of Missouri was home to many waves of European settlement and migration. The lives of early Missouri settlers were often difficult as they adjusted to life on the frontier. In this category, we are looking for works that reveal what life was like for Missourians prior to the Civil War.

Example areas of scholarship within this category are: the Westward Trails, individual stories of pioneers, Missouri migration post-War of 1812.

### Missouri v. Kansas: Border War

Before the official start of the Civil War, a series of violent confrontations played out across the Missouri-Kansas Border. Kickstarted by the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, pro- and anti-slavery settlers rushed to the area, resulting in physical and ideological clashes that continued into the Civil War.

Example areas of scholarship within this category are: Bleeding Kansas & the Kansas/Nebraska Act, Bushwhackers vs Jayhawkers, and the Raid of Lawrence.

### Enslavement in Missouri

By 1860, an estimated 1,118 Black individuals called Missouri home. On the Missouri frontier, 97% of the Black population was enslaved. Enslavement in Missouri did not follow the Southern plantation style; typically, fewer than 10 individuals were enslaved on each property. While enslavement was legal in Missouri, the state was not officially part of the Confederacy and so was not subject to the Emancipation Proclamation.

Example areas of scholarship in this category are: Dred Scott v. Sandford, small-scale slavery (hiring out, abroad marriages, etc.), and post-Emancipation Proclamation enslavement in Missouri.

### Frontier Frontline: Civil War in Missouri

By the end of the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Missourians had served in the Union and Confederate armies and more than 1,200 distinct engagements had been fought across the state, more than all but two states. Missouri was one of only two non-Confederate states with a star on the Confederate flag, despite declaring neutrality during the war.

Example areas of scholarship in this category are: Order No. 11, battles that occurred in Missouri (Ex. Battle of Westport), and United States Colored Troops (USCT) working in Missouri.

## Rebuilding: Reconstruction in Missouri

The period after the end of the Civil War, known as Reconstruction, affected Missouri in profound ways. Following emancipation, free Black Americans formed their own communities across Missouri, complete with all-Black schools and newspapers. In the State Senate, Radical Republicans had gained majority support and promised that Missouri would move forward with increased civil rights for all and a rejection of Southern sympathies. However, these policies were not embraced by all Missourians and new bouts of violence emerged across the state.

Example areas of scholarship in this category are: the Exoduster Movement, free Black migration & the establishment of Black towns, the 1865 Constitutional Convention, and the Iron-Clad Test Oath.

## Creative Works

Our creative works category encompasses all works outside of the category of non-fiction research. These works can be written or visual arts and must be reproduceable in print. Works in this category should relate to one of the six listed subject categories.

### Written Works

Written work should be no more than 1500 words. There is no minimum length requirement for creative written work.

A works cited page is still required for creative works. Please include any materials that were used as sources or inspiration for your creative work. In-text citations are not required but should be included where necessary or relevant.

Types of work in this category include short stories, historical fiction, epistolary writing, narrative, or poetry (this can be a single poem or a collection up to the maximum word count).

### Visual Arts

For visual arts submissions, we require reprintable works like paintings, drawings, or two-dimensional works. Submissions of animation, sculpture, or other three-dimensional work, we would love to see it, but it will not be accepted for this project.

Works in this category must be submitted in high quality color .jpg, .tif, or .pdf, format or original must be delivered to Wornall House.



# FAQs

## Content

### *What is “original research”?*

Original research contains a strong thesis statement backed up by well-cited supporting evidence. We are looking for research that utilizes primary sources as much as possible and something about not rehashing existing scholarship but seeking to bring light to a new aspect of a topic or draw a new conclusion from existing evidence (supported by that evidence, of course, and academically sound).

### *What is a primary source?*

A primary source is a first-hand or contemporary account of an event or topic. Primary sources can include letters, newspaper articles, objects, census statistics, photographs, and other documentation. We encourage you to use existing databases and sources when searching for primary sources. We are not expecting you to go out and find new primary sources (unless you want to).

### *Where can I find primary sources?*

Library archives are good places to start looking for primary sources, as well as online databases. Here are some links to some digital primary source databases to help you get started!

Missouri State Historical Society: <https://shsmo.org/collections/digital>

Missouri Valley Room: <https://kchistory.org/collections/digital-collections>

Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/research-centers/newspaper-and-current-periodical/collections/digital-collections/>

### *What are secondary sources?*

Secondary sources include any documentation or analysis of an event or topic created by people who didn't experience it or had no connection to it. Examples of secondary sources include books, analysis of data, scholarly articles, documentaries, or any other analytical source. Secondary sources often use primary sources in their analysis or for historical

information. You can sometimes find helpful primary sources by consulting the bibliography of reputable secondary sources. You can find helpful, scholarly secondary sources at libraries and in online databases of academic articles, like this one:

<https://library.puc.edu/heritage/bib-civilwarmissouri.html>

*What if I can only find one or two primary sources about my chosen topic?*

It is possible that for some more niche topics, primary sources are scarce. If one or fewer primary sources is used, please provide a short explanation (1-2 sentences).

This can include where you looked for sources & did not find them and/or why the source(s) you found are reliable and credible. You can include this explanation under the source entry in your works cited page/bibliography or include it in the text of the paper where it is relevant.

## Submissions

*Can I submit work in multiple categories?*

Yes! You can submit work for multiple topics, but we only accept one submission per category. We do not accept more than one work per category, but you can submit work in multiple categories. If you submit multiple works, you will only be eligible to win a maximum of two categories.

*Do we accept simultaneous submissions?*

We do not accept simultaneous submissions to other publications/contests or work that has already been published elsewhere. You are free to submit your work to other publications if we do not publish it, but only once we have notified you of our decision.

*Can I submit work I have already written for a class or other reason?*

You can submit an essay you have already written or from a class assignment, as long as it has not been previously published.

*Can I submit multiple works in one category?*

No, we will only accept one work per category.

*What if my work fits in two categories?*

You may feel that your work could fit under more than one general topic. If that is the case, use your best judgement to pick which category is most relevant to the history you are telling.

*Will you own the rights to my submission?*

Once we publish your work, Wornall/Majors will retain copyright and republishing rights over all winning work, including essays, creative written work, and visual arts. This means that you cannot have it published elsewhere after we publish it. If we do not select your essay or creative work, Wornall/Majors retains no rights to the work, and you are free to submit it elsewhere.

*Is my work subject to revision?*

For both essays and creative works, Wornall/Majors reserves the right to edit for formatting, grammar, or clarity without changing the meaning of the work. Writers will be informed of all changes.

*Can I submit co-authored work?*

Yes, you can submit work written by more than one person! If your work is selected, the prize will be split evenly between authors. Each author will be expected to participate in the following stages of the project, including revision and historical events.

## Formatting

*Do I need to use a specific formatting style?*

We recommend using Chicago or MLA to format your work, but other styles are acceptable as well. As long as citations are consistent throughout your paper, you can use whichever style you are most familiar/comfortable with.

*Can I use images in my essay?*

Yes, we encourage you to use images in your essay! If there are images or photographs that are important or would enhance your work, please provide: the image, link, description, and date. Make sure you do not use copyrighted images and that they are available to be used for reprint. Images are encouraged but are not a criterion for judging.

*What if my creative work requires specific formatting?*

If your creative work requires specific formatting (for example, a specific style of poetry), please make that clear in your submission. Creative works are subject to the same edits as essay submissions. It is possible that formatting constraints will necessitate either the editing or disqualification, depending on how much it interferes with reprintability.

## Rubric

Areas of evaluation: Topic choice, Argument & Structure, Style & Clarity, Use of Evidence, Guidelines & Content, Citations & Bibliography.

You can access a downloadable version of the rubric at [America 250 Rubric\\_WMHM.pdf](#)