The Future of Kansas History Summit
September 24-25, 2026, at the Kansas Museum of History, Topeka

The Future of Kansas History Summit is a one-day event inspired by America's 250th that showcases the importance of local history in telling the stories of America. Sponsored by Humanities Kansas and the Kansas Historical Society with support from the Patterson Family Foundation and the *History Makers: The Future is Now* initiative. All events will be held at the Kansas Museum of History, 6425 SW 6th Ave, except for the early bird tour of the Charles Curtis house.

Thursday, September 24, 2026

1:00 **Early bird tour of the Curtis House**

Advanced registration required.

Bus departs at 1:10 pm from the Kansas Historical Society at 6425 SW 6th Avenue to take guests to the historic house. The bus will return no later than 3:00 pm. *Thank you to Clayton Financial Partners for underwriting the bus!*

Charles Curtis was the Vice President of the United States from 1929-1933 and served under President Herbert Hoover. Built in 1879, this grand house in downtown Topeka was home to Charles Curtis and his family from 1907 until his death in 1938. Curtis was a member of the Kaw and Osage nations, and he was the first Indigenous U.S. Vice President. The house is now a state historic site, but not yet open to the public, so this is your sneak peek! Join Patrick Zollner, executive director of the Kansas Historical Society, as he shares stories about the Curtis home. *The house is currently not handicapped accessible. The guided tour will last approximately one hour.*

3:30 **Registration Desk opens**

The Summit begins! Head to the registration desk in the classroom space near the museum lobby to pick up your drink ticket, nametag, and other important information (and Summit swag). The newly renovated Kansas Museum of History will be open for you to enjoy!

4:00 **Guided tours of the Kansas Museum of History**

Tour the museum with the staff who made it happen! There will be two guided tours of the new Kansas Museum of History. Please gather in the lobby at 4:00 or 4:30. *Each tour will last approximately forty-five minutes.*

5:00 **History Happy Hour**

Join us for plenty of food, drink, and conversations in the museum lobby. For one night only, two rare artifacts from the museum's collection — each tied to the national stories at the heart of Candice Millard's books — will be on display. We'll also be collecting questions in advance to ask our special guest following her presentation. Millard's books will also be available for purchase and the museum gift shop will be open! Dessert will be served at 6:00.

7:00 **Keynote Event: The Importance of Local History in Telling America's Stories**

Inspired by America's 250th, author and historian Jonathan Earle will discuss his new book *He Has the People: Abraham Lincoln and the Election of 1860*.

8:00 **Book signing with Jonathan Earle**

Bring your own copy or purchase a copy for signing in the museum lobby. *Thank you to The Raven Bookstore.*

Friday, September 25, 2026

7:00 **Registration table open** and breakfast buffet available.

7:30 **Resource Roundtables**
Join experts from the Kansas Historical Society and get answers to your questions. Come and go to as many tables as you like. Roundtables include:

Collecting for History with Nikaela Zimmerman and Teresa Coble
The future of your museum's collection starts here! Join the museum collections manager and the collections archivist to answer questions about items in your collection and discuss how to collect objects and archival documents to preserve and tell the story of Kansas history.

Getting Started with NAGPRA with Anna Romans and Steven Keehner
The historical society's NAGPRA coordinator will answer your questions about who is required to comply with NAGPRA regulations, what items should be consulted on for repatriation, how to get started, and duty of care. The archeology lab director will share how to manage your Native American archeological collection.

Public Records 101 with Derek Landwehr and Megan Burton
You've just taken custody of records from the flooded courthouse basement. Now what? The historical society's state archivist and traveling archivist will review your legal responsibilities and answer your questions.

Registers of Historic Places with Jamee Fiore Krivenko
Join the historical society's national register coordinator to talk about listing a property in the Registers of Historic Places. Also, share the places you think matter in your community and help us shape preservation in Kansas.

Digitizing Collections with Dylan Sweyko-Kuhlman
If you have ever wondered how to get access to digital copies of KHS collections for research or exhibits, our senior archivist is here to help!

Hands on History: Engaging Students at Your Museum with Trae Johnson and Beth Winkelman
Talk with the KHS education staff to learn how to use primary historical sources to engage students, spark curiosity, and strengthen their critical thinking skills.

"In Plain Sight:" Researching Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and Women's History with Donna Rae Pearson
"In Plain Sight" offers table participants a Q&A opportunity with an expert to explore non-traditional research strategies, overcome archive gaps, and make hidden histories broadly accessible.

Telling Your Kansas Stories with Humanities Kansas with Tracy Quillin
Learn about upcoming opportunities that might be the perfect fit for your museum: A special initiative for rural museums interested in strategic planning, an upcoming Smithsonian traveling exhibition on rural innovation that needs host sites, and the reintroduction of HK's popular grants to help support your grassroots projects.

8:30 **Welcome**
Patrick Zollner, executive director of the Kansas Historical Society

8:40 **Telling Kansas Histories, Raising Kansas Spirits**
Kansas has a rich and engaging past brought to life by local stories found across the state. And yet, the past has also inspired historians to wrestle with our state's deficiencies and wonder, and sometimes worry, about its spirit today. How can we — all of us who are so deeply invested in the heritage of Kansas and the future of our communities — expand how we think about our past, tell our own histories as Kansans, and nurture future Kansas spirits that are as varied, dynamic, and resilient as our state? *Presented by Bill Tsutsui, Chancellor of Ottawa University, historian, author, and Kansas museums enthusiast.*

9:15 **What Do You Think?**
Now it's your turn. Each table becomes a place for engaging small group discussions facilitated by a Kansas historian. Notetakers will record important themes of your conversations to help us all better understand what's on our minds as we enter the "future of Kansas history."

10:00 Break

10:15 **Commemorations: Past, Present, and Future**
Patrick Zollner, Kara Heitz and Jay Price, Kansas historians and members of the Kansas America 250 Commission, share past celebrations of national anniversaries and revolutionary ideas, remember Kansas's own vibrant commemorations, and discuss how historians of the future will engage with our own times. Audrey Coleman, archivist and Director of the Dole Institute at KU, moderates the conversation as participants consider the impact of the 21st century on our state's museums and historical societies. *Patrick Zollner is the Executive Director of the Kansas Historical Society. Kara Heitz is a historian, educator, and owner of Clio Scroll Productions, a media production company. Jay Price is a professor of History and director of the Local and Community History program at Wichita State University,*

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11:40 **Lunch**
A selection of boxed lunches is available for you to enjoy as you step outside, move around, or keep the conversation going at your roundtables.

12:00 **Spotlight on Local Historians**
While we finish lunch, local history stakeholders will share recent research and projects that have made a difference at their museum. The future starts now! You'll have a chance to ask questions following their presentations. Presentations include:

- *Deaf Kansans: Shaping a State, Building a Legacy* with Chriz Dally, Museum of Deaf History, Arts & Culture, Olathe
- *Collaborative Costume Connections: How 12 Small Museums Redefined Collections Management Strategies* with Jennifer Linden, Thomas County Historical Society, Colby
- *Indigenous Lawrence: Nations, Peoples, and Place* with Steve Nowak, Watkins Museum of History, Lawrence and Eric Anderson of Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence

12:45 Break

1:00 **The Far Future of Kansas History**
In the far future, the Martian Museum of Human History is excited to unveil their new interactive human display. But when the new exhibit begins to act awry, it's up to the Museum's curator to find out why. Enjoy this out-of-this world original comedy presented by award-winning writer, actor, and comedian from the Flint Hills, Emmet Spaw.

1:20 **We Want to Hear from You!**
The Kansas Historical Society is considering new initiatives that involve local and county historical societies. This session will provide a basic overview of the ideas and then ask for your feedback through surveys and conversations. *Presented by Patrick Zollner and KSHS staff.*

2:00 **Rural Museums: The Future is Now**
It's all about rural! Join four rural museums as they share firsthand experiences from HK's *History Makers: The Future is Now* strategic doing process. Hear how they engaged their boards and community partners to build plans that position their museums for the future — and discover how your museum could become a *History Maker* in 2027. Presented by Tracy Quillin, Humanities Kansas; Phyllis Bitner, Miners Hall Museum; Diana Staresinic-Deane, Franklin County Historical Society; Stephanie Fisher, Scott County Historical Society; Marci Spaw, Wabaunsee County Historical Society

2:45 **Takeaways**
So, what is the Future of Kansas History? Join Bill Tsutsui for a quick overview of local history's importance in Kansas history, conversations with stakeholders, and a reflection on paths moving forward to expand our Kansas spirits. Patrick Zollner concludes the event.