

What is the Sesquicentennial?

2026 marks an important year for Colorado as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of our statehood and the 250th anniversary of the United States' independence. The term for this combined celebration is Sesquicentennial. State, local, and national initiatives aim to celebrate our past, present, and future through the arts, education, and preservation. We are excited to announce our summer projects and initiatives to commemorate this milestone in Colorado's history!

Frisco's Part in Colorado's History:

Present-day Frisco, Colorado, has been the homeland of Native Americans since time immemorial. The Ute, spelt Nuche, Nuucuu, or Nuu-cui in their traditional language, have lived and hunted in the Blue River Valley for centuries, with nearby archaeological sites dating back 6,000 years.

The first Europeans and Americans to travel into present-day Summit County came in the early 1810s in search of beaver pelts. Their exploration and commercial fur trade led to the establishment of LaBonte's Hole, a rendezvous point at the confluence of the Snake River, Tenmile Creek, and the Blue River. Famous mountain men such as John Fremont, Kit Carson, and Rufus Sage made camp at LaBonte's Hole while exploring the American West. This site is now submerged by the Dillon Reservoir.

The first permanent cabin in Frisco was built in 1873 by a Swedish immigrant named Henry Recen, who located the Juno silver mine at the base of Mount Royal. The name "Frisco" was soon attached to his cabin by Henry Learned in an attempt to attract the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company, a.k.a. the Frisco Line. While this line was rerouted out of the state, the mining camp eventually attracted two railroads, and the name stuck. Frisco was incorporated in 1879 and quickly became a bustling town with dozens of mines sprouting up around and into the Tenmile Canyon. The town's early population followed the booms and busts of the silver, gold, lead, zinc, and copper industries, dropping to only 18 people in 1930.

During the 1940s, operations at Camp Hale brought soldiers to the area and into Frisco during military maneuvers over Vail Pass. Many women in Frisco supported the war efforts through volunteer work with the Red Cross. Throughout the broader mid-century, Frisco's population slowly rebounded following infrastructure projects, such as the paving of Loveland Pass, the construction of the Dillon Dam and Reservoir, and the later boring of the Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnels. After many of the mines ceased operations, the next rush began with the arrival of skiing to Summit County, ushering in the new era of our present-day outdoor recreation industry.



How are we celebrating?

To celebrate our history and the Sesquicentennial, we have framed our operations to offer visitors and attendees a glimpse into the landscape both 250 and 150 years ago. We are excited to host Native American speakers and musicians for several special edition lectures and events. Other special edition lectures will highlight significant figures in early Colorado and the American West, such as Teddy Roosevelt and Casimiro Barela, Black history in Colorado, and local favorites such as railroads, skiing, and mining. Museum staff will showcase the surrounding natural landscape and habitat as it was 250 years ago by introducing natural history programs focused on geology, native flora, and local fauna. To celebrate Frisco during Colorado's march for statehood, a temporary exhibit will be installed in the Schoolhouse, showcasing artifacts and photographs on loan from the descendants of Henry Recen, early town artifacts from the Museum's collections, and foundational town documents. Our signature event, Frisco History Day, will focus on the industries that fueled Colorado during the silver rush era. Summer-long programming focused on our mining history will take visitors to old mining sites and teach them about the commerce that built Frisco. Museum staff will also conduct a site cleanup at the historic Hathaway-Lamping Coke Ovens to ensure the site's longevity and presentation. For our younger friends, we are excited to offer, for the first time, a week-long museum and archaeology camp this summer. Three preservation projects are underway at the Historic Park, including replacing sections of the Jail floor, shoring up the north wall of the Annie Ruth House, and replacing log courses on the Bailey House. Looking towards our future, stop by the Schoolhouse to participate in our community wall by sharing what you love about Frisco and where you see the town 150 years from now.

We look forward to a summer full of programming to celebrate Frisco's history, culture, and future. To get in contact with us and learn more about our summer programming, check out FriscoHistoricPark.com, or reach us at Museum@TownofFrisco.com or (970)668-3428.

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