



## America at 250: Wilmington's Story, Our Shared Future

As our nation celebrates 250 years of independence, we remember a simple truth: America's story is built one community at a time.

Wilmington's chapter began before the nation itself. Founded in 1739 on the banks of the Cape Fear River, our city grew as a colonial port where merchants, shipbuilders, and tradesmen came to build something of their own. The freedom to work, trade, and chart your own course drew people here decades before it became the promise of a new nation. In 1765, Wilmington's own citizens [stood against unjust taxation](#), years before the Boston Tea Party. And in April 1776, North Carolina became the first colony to call for American independence. That instinct, to lead rather than wait, still defines this region.

The small port city of those early days has grown into a thriving hub of commerce, entrepreneurship, and opportunity. Generations of leaders, businesses, and citizens built that success on the same principles that founded our country: free enterprise, fair competition, and the belief that anyone willing to work can build a better life. That promise is what makes America unlike any other nation. Here, your path is yours to chart.

Our state motto puts it plainly: *Esse quam videri*. To be, rather than to seem. In southeastern North Carolina, that has always meant building real things. Ships and ports. Businesses and institutions. Futures and families.

As the first and longest continually operating chamber of commerce in North Carolina, the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce has worked alongside our region's businesses and community leaders for generations to build a stronger economy and a better quality of life for all who call southeastern North Carolina home. Our mission remains clear: to serve as the convener of leaders, the connector of businesses, and the champion of opportunity for our region. We are proud to be the voice of the business community and to help create a vibrant, prosperous region where businesses thrive, communities flourish, and leaders work together to shape a stronger future.

As we mark 250 years of American progress, we celebrate all that has been accomplished. We also recognize that the work of building a brighter future is never complete. Each generation inherits both the benefits of past investments and the responsibility to prepare for what comes next.

That responsibility guides our work today. Whether advocating for a new Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, supporting critical infrastructure, strengthening our workforce, or fostering economic growth, we are focused on opportunities that will serve our region not just for the next few years, but for generations to come.

The founders of this nation, and the founders of this city, invested in things they would never see finished. We owe the next 250 years the same.

Our state toast celebrates the land of the long leaf pine, "where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great." That single line captures the work of a chamber of commerce, and the promise of America itself. America's anniversary is not only a celebration of our past. It is an invitation to build the future. Together, through collaboration and a shared commitment to progress, we can make sure the best chapters of our story are still ahead.

On this historic milestone, the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce proudly celebrates our nation's first 250 years and renews our commitment to southeastern North Carolina and the generations yet to come.

Sincerely,

Natalie English  
President & CEO, Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

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