HISTORIC LOCUST GROVE
GROVE GAZETTE
Fall 2025

Locust Grove's Soirée Celebrates Supporters, Introduces '250for250' Campaign

Lydia Lewis, Director of Development

On October 2nd, Historic Locust Grove gathered together with our top supporters and community partners for an elegant evening called **The Soirée**. A night no one will soon forget, we celebrated the special importance Locust Grove holds, both in the past and for our future.

The purpose of the event was threefold – it served as an introduction to meet our new President and CEO **Jessica Dawkins**; it was a kickoff event for our annual appeal; and it was a homecoming. For the first time in many years, we held a gala inside the historic home itself.

This year's annual appeal campaign is called **"250for250"** and honors the semiquincentennial of the Declaration of Independence.

Our goal is to raise $250,000 by July 4, 2026, in order to bring our bold new vision to life. In this vision, we'll develop a new civic education program centered on virtue *(see Director of Education **Ronnie Dreistadt's** article on Page 6)* and an initiative that will focus on land stewardship through Indigenous practices. We announced these at The Soirée as we leaned into the power of place to inspire our most dedicated supporters.

This progressive experience began inside our historic house with cocktails by **Angels Envy Bourbon** and appetizers by Food Network star **Damaris Phillips**, who based her menu off Croghan family grocery lists.

The authenticity of the moment was enhanced by **Lisa Lewis** playing the harpsichord, and guests sat for portraits by **Hilton Saffia**.





Historic Locust Grove's Board of Directors enjoyed the Soirée.

We progressed to the renovated Audubon Room for dinner with award-winning chef **Dallas McGarity**, after which our guests heard a rousing speech on our upcoming campaign. In that speech, Jessica Dawkins posed the question, "What if the solution to our biggest problems — for our city and for our nation — is actually the oldest idea of them all? *E Pluribus Unum*, Out of many, we become one."

To close out the evening, we moved to our outdoor Pavilion with a poetic recitation by **Rita Spalding**, music by the **Louisville Academy of Music**, and a dessert by **Louisville Cream** and **Georgia's Sweet Potato Pie Company** that paid homage to the thousands of field trips we've hosted over the years.

Each guest left with a custom print of the Locust Grove property by Louisville artist **Maizie Clarke**, symbolizing the creativity and collaboration at the heart of Locust Grove's mission.

While the Soirée offered guests an unforgettable experience, the true purpose of the evening was to share a vision that belongs to everyone.

Now, as the **250for250** campaign opens to the entire community, Locust Grove invites all who believe in the power of history, education, and civic virtue to take part. Because the future of our city is cultivated one virtuous citizen at a time.

A MESSAGE FROM LOCUST GROVE PRESIDENT & CEO JESSICA DAWKINS



On October 2nd, we held an evening to remember – The Soirée. In a room of our top 100 donors, community partners, and supporters, we thanked them for their dedication to our success. But it was also crucial to garner new support while serving the needs of our community and staying true to our mission.

I always say we are cultural generators that connect authentic experiences over place and time. Those experiences can be human or environmental, the place can be here or throughout the region, and the time can be 200 years ago or tomorrow. Our job is to tie them together. We use authenticity to tell the whole story of Locust Grove's past, and we use culture as our connector to our future.

The values and priorities of Locust Grove fit into **Four Pillars: HISTORY, ARTS, CIVICS, and LAND.**

History includes Lectures, Antiques Fair, Book Sale. **Arts** include everything from Frankenstein to Chamber Music. **Civics** is a big part of our current work. (Our July 4th Naturalization Ceremony is a great example.) I'm also happy to serve as the Vice Chair for the City of Louisville's official US250 Committee.









But our most important asset is the **Land**. We believe this is sacred ground — from when it was home to Indigenous tribes to environmental education programs that we share with those without access to green space.

These pillars are how we anchor ourselves to the work ahead and how we align ourselves with our supporters, especially for Sponsors. Now you choose the pillar that best aligns with your values and receive recognition for all events within that pillar. That way, sponsors receive recognition for investment in our mission rather than investment in a moment.

At the Soirée, we announced our **250for250** campaign to fund a bold new vision for two major initiatives. One is how we share the full picture of this land. We have yet to learn our true Indigenous past, and I think we need to let the land itself share that story.

We've connected with the Eastern Shawnee Tribe to become land stewards like their ancestors were over two centuries ago. This work will be long, but it will serve as ecological preservation and a true form of living history.

The other initiative is to develop a new civics education program. Our Director of Education **Ronnie Dreistadt** describes the specifics in his story on Page 6, but you will receive more information by mail in the coming weeks.

This campaign is our annual appeal, and we only have until July 4th, 2026 to meet our goal so we ask you join in this important work. Thank you for investing in us; we are more excited than ever.



Grove Gazette is published by Historic Locust Grove, Inc. for members, volunteers and supporters of Historic Locust Grove. ©2025
561 Blankenbaker Lane
Louisville, KY 40207
(502) 897-9845
www.locustgrove.org

The mission of Historic Locust Grove is to preserve and interpret the historic landscape and buildings of Locust Grove, the final home of Louisville's founder George Rogers Clark, and to tell the stories of all the individuals who lived and worked here, both free and enslaved, cultivating a deeper understanding of the present through a richer understanding of the past.

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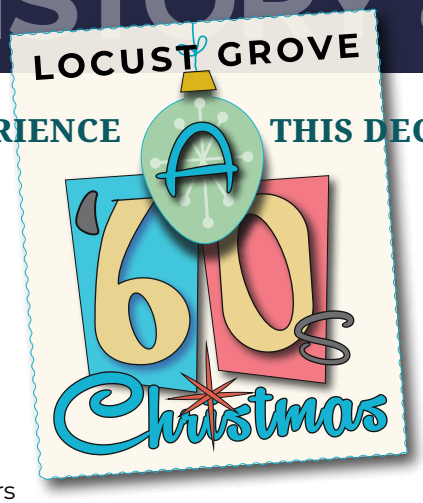
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EXPERIENCE THIS DECEMBER AT LOCUST GROVE

Kaitlyn Tisdale, M.A., Director of Mission

Locust Grove will welcome visitors to our new holiday exhibition — **A '60s Christmas**! This historic house display invites visitors to explore Christmas as it would have looked 60 years ago, paying tribute to the 60th anniversary of Locust Grove as a museum.

For the month of December, Locust Grove's halls will be decked with decorations of the decade, along with the fashions of the time. Accompanying exhibition panels will highlight the holiday season of Louisville in the 1960s.

A look back to Christmas in the 1960s would find aluminum tinsel shimmering on trees, bubble lights glowing in living rooms, and Bing Crosby's familiar croon from the turntable — all signaling a holiday season during the 1960s.

Christmas in the 1960s was a season of both tradition and innovation. Families across the country held fast to long-standing traditions while embracing new styles and adding their own mid-century flair.

In Louisville, the holiday season carried its own local traditions. Shoppers flocked downtown to stores like Stewart's or Kaufman-Straus where festive window displays and visits to Santa brought families into the heart of the city. Churches held candlelight services, neighborhoods glowed with outdoor lights, and an entire village of gingerbread was constructed in Chenoweth Park.

With trees trimmed and aromas of gingerbread permeating the house, television sets broadcast the successful Gemini space missions and previews of ***A Charlie Brown Christmas***, scheduled to make its television debut on CBS. The Civil Rights Movement, the Space Race, and the Vietnam War all shaped the world in which families celebrated Christmas.

While the nation was undergoing this metamorphosis, the 1960s was a period of immense transformation for Locust Grove as well. The long-time home and farm of the Waters family quickly underwent a rapid restoration project under the leadership of many community leaders. They include **Sam Thomas, Walter Macomber, Winthrop Allen, Judge Macauley Smith, Sara Shallenberger "Sally" Brown, Mary Bingham, Emilie Strong Smith, Iva Louise McElwain, Jean Stewart Ogden, Elizabeth Potter**, and many more.

The result? Locust Grove became the second of Louisville's historic house museums, exemplifying the blend of tradition and innovation in our city.

Starting with our first holiday season in 1964, Locust Grove joined Louisville's local holiday traditions. Volunteers and board members decked the halls with arrangements of fruit and fresh greenery. They draped cedar roping on the front door and mantelpiece and created an apple and holly arrangement for the dining table.


Locust Grove Wears a Holiday Air

In December 1966, the Louisville Courier-Journal highlighted holiday festivities at Locust Grove, which included special decorations and performances by madrigal singers during Locust Grove's new "Candlelight Tours."

Locust Grove's visitors in the '60s attended candlelight concerts in the parlor of the historic house and heard performances by madrigal singers from Anchorage Public School and students from the Kentucky Home School.

For some visitors, this year's **A '60s Christmas** may spark memories of their own childhoods. For others, it's a rare glimpse into the celebration of their parents and grandparents, connecting generations through shared traditions.

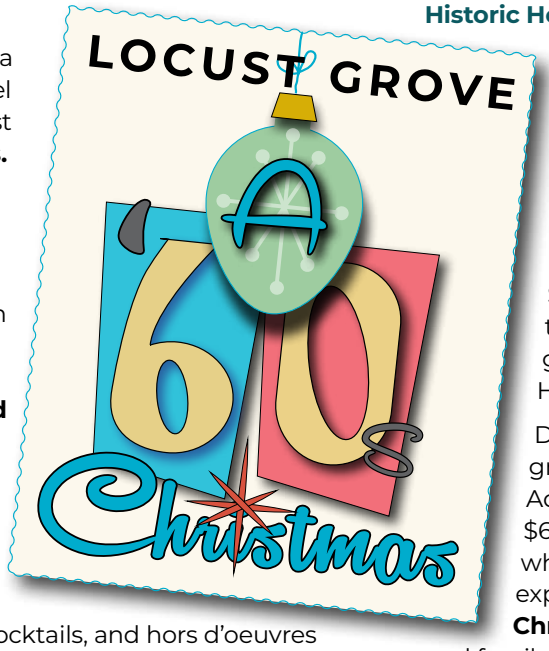
At Locust Grove, we are committed to exploring the many layers of history that have shaped our site and our community around us.

By turning our attention to the 1960s, we invite you to reflect on the ways that our holiday traditions — whether rooted in centuries past or in living memory — help connect generations through festive celebrations in rituals of joy, generosity, and connection.

UPCOMING

A '60s CHRISTMAS' CELEBRATION

Thursday, December 18,
7 PM Price: $25



Experience the holidays in a whole new way as we travel to yesteryear with our latest exhibit – **A '60s Christmas.** Honoring Locust Grove's 60th anniversary as a museum, we'll transform the historic house with authentic decorations from American mid-century holiday traditions. **Wear your favorite '60s-inspired outfits (prizes for best look!) and partake in classic recipes** as we delight in the sights and sounds of decades past.

HISTORY

Holiday cocktails, mocktails, and hors d'oeuvres are included in the ticket price.

A '60s CHRISTMASTIDE

Saturday, December 6, 10 AM – 5 PM
Historic House Admission: $6 each

HISTORY

Celebrate the holiday season with a full day of festivities at Locust Grove's **A '60s Christmastide**. This campus-wide holiday event has something for everyone.

Enjoy a holiday musical performance by the students of Lincoln Performing Arts Elementary School, explore the **A '60s Christmas** exhibit in the historic house, create holiday crafts in the great parlor, and pick up books at our expanded Holiday Book Sale.

Don't forget to shop in our Museum Store and grab a few sweet treats from our holiday bake sale. Admission to the site is free, but there is a special $6 rate for those who wish to experience **A '60s Christmas** exhibit and family activities within the historic house.



A '60s CHRISTMAS' CANDLELIGHT TOURS

December 9, 10, and 11
Two tours each night: 6 PM and 7:30 PM
$20 for adults, $10 for children



Back by popular demand — **Holiday Candlelight Tours**! Step back in time as Locust Grove celebrates its 60th anniversary with the beloved tradition of Candlelight Tours inside the historic house. This year's exhibit is a festive look at Christmas in the 1960s, with mid-century holiday décor, iconic '60s fashions, and the warm glow of candles and bubble lights. Guests will also learn how Louisville celebrated the season six decades ago.

HISTORY

The tour includes a stop by the museum store to enjoy holiday refreshments — including Christmas cookies, hot cider, and coffee — and browse festive gifts to take home.

Registration and advance payment is required and each tour is limited to 15 guests. To reserve your tickets in advance, go to www.locustgrove.org.

HOLIDAY BOOK SALE

Member Preview: **Thursday, December 4**
General Sale: **Friday – Sunday, December 5 – 7**
10 AM – 5 PM each day

Thanks to a remarkable book collection recently donated to Locust Grove, this year's Holiday Book Sale will be bigger and better than ever, with the entire auditorium transforming into a reader's paradise.

Discover an exceptional selection of fine-quality volumes, including beautiful bindings, classic literature, poetry, cookbooks, and children's books, alongside a delightful assortment of holiday-themed books perfect for gifting or cozy winter reading.

HISTORY



Whether you're a seasoned collector or simply love the feel of a good book, this expanded Holiday Book Sale invites you to browse, linger, and let the right story find you.

EVENTS

BURNS NIGHT DINNER AT LOCUST GROVE

Saturday, January 24, 2026
VIP Ticket-holders, 5 PM
Dinner, 6 PM

VIP - $150 per person. (Includes cocktails and musical performance in the historic house prior to the dinner)
Dinner Only - $100 per person
VIP Table of 8 - $1,150 per table
Dinner Table of 8 - $750 per table

ARTS

Raise a glass to Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns at Locust Grove's **Burns Night Dinner**. It will be an evening filled with traditional food, music, poetry, and history in celebration of Scotland's beloved poet. The festive supper will feature classic Scottish fare (including haggis!), lively toasts, bagpipe music, and readings of the famous bard's most cherished works. Purchase a table for your family and friends and save!

Reservations and advance payment are required. Visit www.locustgrove.org for ticket information and menu details. ***Slainte mhath!***

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON LECTURE

How Louisville Transformed America

HISTORY

Wednesday, February 5, 2026, 1:15 PM
Cost: $8, or $6 for Members

Doors open at 12:50 p.m. for desserts and beverages; lectures begin at 1:15 p.m.





Join architect-historian **Steve Wiser**, FAIA, and Farmington docent **David Green** as they show how Louisville helped shape the nation. Three U. S. Presidents and three Supreme Court Justices had strategic interactions with Louisville that resulted in significant physical and cultural changes for our nation. While these events resulted in major transformations of the United States, few in Louisville, and fewer still in the country, realize how these Louisville connections led to America's growth and evolution.

GARDENS & GROUNDS

LAND

OH, DEER! OR WHY WE CAN'T HAVE NICE THINGS

Sarah Sutherland, Gardener



The history of deer is intertwined with the history of our country. Early Kentucky settlers subsisted on wild game, elk, turkey, bison, turtles and, especially, deer. So ubiquitous were deer that the hides were a standard item of trade, with the word "buck" attached to the one-dollar coin (and bill) in later years.

Buffalo and other game quickly fled before the encroachment of later settlers, while deer became hunted in such numbers that the founding fathers became concerned deer would be wiped out.

In June 1779, the Kentucky General Assembly became concerned about the dwindling herds around settled areas. It created a bill that would set seasons for hunting bucks and does, with violators paying a 20-schilling fine.

Earlier legal suggestions included a ban on deer hunting from 1772 to August 1, 1776, It provided severe penalties for violations, including fines and whippings. Henry McMurtrie, in his 1819 "Sketches of Louisville," noted that, "Deer inhabit the barrens, and are sometimes seen within a few miles of town."

Fast forward to 2025. Locust Grove sits in the middle of a large city. Deer cannot be hunted as the Croghans and the other Locust Grove residents would have done, so they multiply freely. At dusk, it's not uncommon to see herds of eight or more browsing in our quads.

This year has been especially difficult. Our pumpkin patch was decimated in just one weekend, even though it was protected by netting and wire hoops. One of the Pavilion planters also attracted their attention. The deer used the willow inside the planter to rub velvet off their antlers, leaving the shrub badly broken and the pot scored with antler marks.

This being a modern problem, we are going to have to find a modern solution — one that will still allow us to maintain a historic look and feel to the site. To that end, I will be meeting with a wildlife biologist to see what solutions we can come up with to a problem the Croghans and 18th century lawmakers could never have imagined.

EDUCATION

LOCUST GROVE'S STUDENT PROGRAMS TO FOCUS ON CIVICS EDUCATION

Ronnie Dreistadt, Director of Education

As we near the nation's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, Locust Grove is digging deep into the founding ideals of our nation. This focus brought us to recognize the Founders' emphasis on virtue and how a virtuous citizenry is essential to the success of a democratic government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

For much of our past, children learned civic virtues like civility, respect, and responsibility from our families, schools, churches, neighbors, and community groups. So it's no surprise to learn these virtues were taken very seriously by the Croghan family at Locust Grove. Family letters, diaries, and their social reputation reveal a common thread of the importance of civic virtue. For the Croghans, the American Revolution didn't end with a victory on the battlefield; it was an experiment of continuous exploration in self-governance.

But as we reckon with the legacy of our nation's beginnings, we acknowledge the contradiction between our walk and our talk. How can we believe that "all men are created equal" while also enslaving people of color or displacing Indigenous tribes?

These are deeply complex issues embedded within our nation, and with no easy answer in sight. Here at Locust Grove, **Civics** is now one of the four pillars of our mission. As we enhance current educational experiences with civic themes, we're also developing a larger, more comprehensive program.

In a democratic government, there are basic tenets to productive citizenship, but they require a foundation of character and integrity to execute. Our goal is to establish a civics education initiative based on virtue as a path to civic engagement.

This program will bring together a diverse group of high school students for a year-long program to learn about individual virtues. They will have a deep mentorship with elders and community members, along with a focus on service and the responsibilities we bear to each other.

In a modern society that often values vice, individualism, and apathy, we at Locust Grove accept the challenge of educating our students — one individual virtue at a time — to help create a new generation of citizens and build toward the very ideals our founders envisioned. We look forward to sharing new developments on this program throughout the **America250** celebration.

SPIRIT AWARD – Jennifer Whitehead



The Volunteer Steering Committee has selected **Jennifer Whitehead** as this issue's Spirit Award winner because of her enthusiastic volunteer activities and her generous spirit.

Jennifer has been a devoted proponent of Locust Grove for more than 40 years. She has always loved history and was delighted to serve as a docent in the early 1980s. When her young children started school, she left to return to teaching in Jefferson County.

"But I brought my eighth graders to Locust Grove on field trips for years," she says. "And Locust Grove is always a must-see stop for out-of-town family and friends."

When she retired in 2020, she took an active role in her DAR chapter. That brought her back to Locust Grove in her chapter's search for a recipient of its Woman in American History award. As she talked with staff and volunteers, she realized she'd like to return to being a docent at Locust Grove.

Since 2023, she's been a weekly docent as well as leading school tours and special events. She helps to recruit volunteers, enjoys working with the Naturalization ceremonies held at Locust Grove, and participates in Louisville's national projects, such as the Lafayette Bicentennial.

She's also on Louisville's official **America250** committee to plan Louisville's participation in the country's 250th birthday celebration, along with Locust Grove President and CEO **Jessica Dawkins.**

"It's an honor to experience Jennifer's consistent dedication to the memory of those who fought in the American Revolution and her focus on how the original American Patriots influenced the city of Louisville," says Jessica. "With all the **America250** celebrations planned for 2026, Locust Grove is so lucky to have her spirit and passion along the way."

And Jennifer loves sharing the history of Locust Grove with guests, hoping to "help them understand historical ideas they might not otherwise know," she says.

SUPPORTERS

Many thanks to the people who support Historic Locust Grove through membership, sponsorship, and donations. We depend upon and deeply appreciate your generosity and involvement.
Donations received from July 1 through September 30, 2025.

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LAND PILLAR — *Gardeners' Fair, Green Spaces, etc.*

Kate and Mark Boyer

WELCOME

Sarah Baker



Sarah Baker joined Locust Grove as the new Director of Experience in late July. She is responsible for our rental program as well as collaboration on fundraising events and community outreach.

She loved coming to Locust Grove with her parents and siblings when she was growing up — which cultivated a deep connection with the site and a love for its mission.

With her degree in art history, Sarah is ecstatic to work in a museum showcasing the splendor of Kentucky, and to share Locust Grove's history with all who visit.

Sarah has a varied background in retail, sales, marketing, and special events. She loves working with bridal parties and their families and is eager to cultivate connections within the broader community.

"I take pride in building lasting relationships and connecting people with meaningful places," she says. "I am a passionate ally of Locust Grove, and contributing to its ongoing impact is such an honor."

You can reach Sarah at SBaker@locustgrove.org.

WE'RE CLOSED IN JANUARY.

Locust Grove will close for the winter holiday on Dec. 21 and reopen to the public on Feb. 3. During this time, staff and volunteers will prepare for an exciting new season of programs, tours and events – including a new exhibit in the historic house. Stay tuned! And, during the closure, we'll host a Burns Night Dinner on Sat., Jan. 24, 2026. ***(See Events, page 5.)***

We thank our visitors, members, and supporters for a wonderful year of history and community. We wish you a warm, safe, and healthy winter season – and look forward to welcoming you to Locust Grove in February.

Historic Locust Grove
561 Blankenbaker Lane
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www.locustgrove.org

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Holiday Book Sale
***Members' Preview:* Thurs., Dec. 4**
***Public Sale:* Fri.–Sun., Dec. 5–7**
10 AM-5 PM each day

Fall 2025



WIN AN ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRISTMAS TEA IN LOCUST GROVE'S HISTORIC HOUSE!

Sarah Baker, Director of Experience

Imagine hosting your own Christmas Tea in the grand parlor of Locust Grove's historic house. That's the prize for the winner of our new Holiday Raffle.

You can win an all-inclusive event for up to 25 people to be held on **Saturday, December 20 at 2:00 p.m**. in the great parlor on the second floor of this National Historic Landmark. The prize includes an afternoon of fine teas, exquisite cakes, sumptuous scones, delicate sandwiches, sparkling champagne, and a tour of the latest **A '60s Christmas** exhibit.

We're selling just 100 chances for you to celebrate the holidays in the home "where Louisville begins." Tickets are $50 each and you can purchase as many tickets as you like, while supplies last. The winner will be chosen at random on December 1, 2025.

Don't miss this rare and unique opportunity.
Visit www.locustgrove.org to get yours today!

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