

Museum on Main Street Overview

Now in its 10th year of sharing the Smithsonian's cultural resources with rural America, Museum on Main Street is a one-of-a-kind cultural project. It is a partnership of the Smithsonian, the Federation of State Humanities Councils, and individual state humanities councils that serves small-town museums and residents of rural America.

One-fifth of all Americans live in rural areas and one-half of all U.S. museums are located in small towns. Museum on Main Street seeks to provide these institutions with access to resources they may not otherwise have and to assist them in making lasting improvements to advance their museums' objectives. It combines the prestige of Smithsonian exhibitions, the program expertise of state humanities councils, and the remarkable volunteerism and unique histories of small rural towns. SITES received a special appropriation from Congress to continue its outreach to rural towns and communities in the United States through the Museum on Main Street partnership. To date, Museum on Main Street exhibitions have traveled to over 300 towns with populations of 500 to 20,000 in 36 states.

Museum on Main Street's four exhibitions focus on broad topics of national history and give host museums the opportunity, with support from state humanities councils, to create their own educational programs, cultural activities, and exhibitions that center on their local heritage. Consisting of freestanding kiosks and original objects, the exhibitions have been specifically designed to address the space and staffing constraints of small cultural institutions. Kiosks travel in easy-to-handle wheeled crates and can be assembled and disassembled with minimal effort. Exhibition support materials and "how to" training workshops are provided to venues hosting the exhibitions.

The Museum on Main Street's website—www.museumonmainstreet.org—has detailed information for potential venues, the general public, and members of the press, including tour schedules and educational resources for each exhibition. State and local Museum on Main Street coordinators are also able to use the site as a key administrative and assistance tool.

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