



CONSIDERING *CROSSROADS*

Crossroads: Change in Rural America
A Smithsonian traveling exhibit touring
Alabama, 2023-2024

Presented by:

**ALABAMA
HUMANITIES
ALLIANCE**

 Smithsonian

With support from:

Vulcan
Materials Company



We Are All Rural Alabama

The Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street traveling exhibit *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* visits Alabama in 2023-2024, traveling to five communities across the state: **Cleveland, White Hall, Roanoke, Triana, and Ozark**. The exhibit's theme is fitting for Alabama, as we are, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the eighth-most rural state in the nation. In fact, we've become more rural in the last year due to changing census definitions of the term. Now, a town qualifies as "urban" only if it has 5,000 residents or more, up from 2,500 residents, a figure that had guided the census definition since 1910.

In some way, then, we are all connected to rural life in Alabama. Many of us grew up in rural places, still have family there, and visit the final resting places of loved ones there. Some of us are hunters and fishers, and eagerly await the open seasons to get back to rural Alabama. We go to rural places to hike, to work, to take in the bucolic imagery, to visit, to gather for community days and reunions, to birdwatch, and to pass through to some other place. We rely on the farmers and ranchers in rural Alabama for food, dairy, grain, and more. To amend the exhibit's main argument, what happens in rural Alabama matters to *all* of Alabama.

Crossroads offers an opportunity to connect past and present, and to consider the central place of rural Alabama in our future. Through its five themes — **identity, land, community, persistence, and managing change** — *Crossroads* intertwines stories of Alabama and America's changing rural life. Visitors will encounter histories of Native Nations who occupied the land before statehood; the long life of agriculture in Alabama; the birth of rural industry; dramatic changes to the landscape beginning in the 1930s (think TVA); and rural folkways, so rich throughout our state. Perhaps most importantly, the exhibit offers a chance to talk with our youth — the inheritors of rural Alabama — and to learn their ideas for its future.

Together, our host communities will give local perspectives on these themes so we can more closely consider the promise and challenges of rural life in our contemporary moment. We invite you to join the exhibit at any of its stops statewide to lend your voice to a conversation about what **connects** us, and where we go from here.

Julia Brock, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of History, University of Alabama
Crossroads project scholar, Alabama Humanities Alliance

The Smithsonian comes to...

CLEVELAND, ALABAMA

September 12 - October 28, 2023



◆◆ Nestled in the hills of northern Alabama, Blount County proudly wears the title of "Covered Bridge Capital of Alabama." Twenty covered bridges once crisscrossed its creek and rivers. The county abounds with rich history: Native American artifacts now housed at the Smithsonian; the Forrest-Streight Raid during the Civil War, the observations of journalist Mary Gordon Duffee about elite society gatherings at the Blount Springs Spa; the birthplace of Kelly Ingram, first U.S. servicemen killed in World War I; and the housing of German and Italian prisoners of war during World War II in Oneonta.

Today, Blount County comprises part of the Birmingham Metropolitan Statistical Area, but remains far enough away to avoid being termed a bedroom suburb. Yet the construction of the Northern Beltline several miles from Blount's southeastern boundary will bring significant changes for area residents. Blount County is indeed at a crossroads, and the Crossroads exhibit offers a chance to celebrate our rich heritage, examine our past, and consider our future.

Come visit us:

September 12 - October 28, 2023
Blount County Schools Professional
Development Center
62541 U.S. 231 | Cleveland, AL 35049

Hours and contact info:

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Evenings and weekends by appointment.

Local programming partners:

- Local quilters' guilds
- Retired coal miners
- County garden clubs
- Auburn University's Blount County Extension
- Blount County Cattleman Association
- Blount County Arts Council



Swann Covered Bridge across the Locust Fork River, Blount County. Photo by Scott Baker.

September 22: "Change in Rural Alabama" teacher workshop by the Alabama Humanities Alliance, featuring poetry and lectures on Alabama history by four noted scholars, along with a guided tour of the Crossroads exhibit. 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Presented by the Blount County Memorial Museum.



The Smithsonian comes to...

WHITE HALL, ALABAMA

November 4 - December 9, 2023

◆◆ The town of White Hall was established during the Great Depression as a New Deal project. It sits above the Alabama River, upon land that has been home to both White-owned plantations and a major Creek town. In 1935, the Resettlement Administration purchased the land of the former White Hall plantation, divided it up, and sold the plots to Black families through low-interest loans.

During the civil rights movement, White Hall became a center of activism. Today, the National Park Service's Lowndes Interpretive Center tells that history in vivid detail, as part of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. The Trail commemorates the people, events, and route of the 54-mile march that led to the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Come visit us:

November 4 - December 9, 2023

Lowndes Interpretive Center
7002 U.S. Highway 80 West
White Hall, AL 36040

Hours and contact info:

Wednesday-Saturday: 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
334.421.7750
nps.gov/semo

Local programming and exhibits:

- 1965 voter registration and education campaigns in Lowndes County
- Deaths of White civil rights allies Jonathan Daniels and Viola Liuzzo
- Trail to Tent City, which housed Black families evicted from their tenant farms by White landowners for seeking the right to vote



Lowndes Interpretive Center.

The Smithsonian comes to... ROANOKE, ALABAMA

December 18, 2023 – February 2, 2024



“We are excited to have the Smithsonian coming to the City of Roanoke. This exhibit reaches everyone in the community, from the oldest to the youngest. It allows everyone to look at where we have been and outline where we are going. We hope to build a sense of community involvement with presenting the Crossroads exhibit to Roanoke. Most of all, we are looking for innovative thinkers to step forward with new ideas for this great city.” —Mayor Jill Patterson

What we now know as the city of Roanoke was initially settled as High Pine in the 1830s. Residents then briefly called it Chulafinee until 1836, before being named Roanoke in 1840.

The Randolph County town has seen its industries evolve from pottery mills, saw mills, grist mills, and tanning yards to farming, manufacturing, and retail. Its most famous product is likely the Ella Smith Doll, aka the Indestructible Doll, manufactured in Ella Smith’s factory around the turn of the 20th century. But Randolph County is best known for U.S. Highway 431, the “North-South Fast Route,” which has long taken northern travelers to Gulf Coast beaches.

Come visit us:

December 18, 2023 - February 2, 2024
Annie L. Awbrey Public Library
736 College Street | Roanoke, AL 36274

Hours and contact info:

Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.-noon
annielawbrey@yahoo.com
roanokealabama.org/library

Local programming and partners:

- Local history and genealogy services
- Exhibits and events in partnership with the Randolph County Historical Museum, Main Street Committee, and Handley High School Community Studies Class and School Career Development Center



Children reading books next to the Randolph County Library bookmobile, 1920s. Courtesy Alabama Department of Archives & History.

October 2023: Community Studies “Lunch & Learn.” Awbrey Public Library. Noon.

Presented by the Annie L. Awbrey Public Library.



The Smithsonian comes to...

TRIANA, ALABAMA

February 14 - April 12, 2024

“The Crossroads exhibit speaks to the heart and soul of the Triana community. It provides an opportunity for local people to experience a world-class display that carries out the Smithsonian mission: to educate and inspire participants to research and preserve their history.”

—Betty Williams, president, Triana Historical Society

Since its incorporation in 1819, the historic town of Triana has contributed to the Industrial Revolution, agricultural advancements, and regional economic growth. The town has also provided a vehicle for Black political and social enfranchisement, as it elected several Black mayors in the Deep South and provided a refuge for African Americans — many of whom descended from those who worked the nearby docks and land against their will.

Triana has seen many changes over the past two centuries, especially in recent years with the rapid growth of nearby Huntsville. That makes preserving the town’s history and culture even more important. The Crossroads exhibit will be displayed at the Triana Health Clinic, a historic, 1941-era structure built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The clinic was vital to providing healthcare to rural, low-income, Black families in north Alabama.

Come visit us:

February 14 – April 12, 2024
Historic Triana Health Clinic
151 Stone Street | Triana, AL 35756

Hours and contact info:

Tuesday/Thursday/Friday: 1-6 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday: 1-4 p.m.
256.772.9943
trianahealthclinic.org

Local programming and exhibits:

- Local artwork, including a mural of early Triana homes and an Alabama Authors Quilt
- Interviews with local farmers, elected officials, and Tennessee River experts



Historic Triana Health Clinic.

October 21, 2023: Triana Crossroads Festival, Flamingo Park, celebrating the newly restored Triana Health Clinic and telling the story of the Tennessee River. Plus, artwork, a 5K fun run, and more.

February 15, 2024: Crossroads opening reception at Triana Public Library. 3-7 p.m.

Presented by the Triana Historical Society.

The Smithsonian comes to...

OZARK, ALABAMA

April 17 - June 21, 2024



Located in Alabama's Wiregrass region, the town of Ozark began as a small settlement on land that was long part of the Creek Nation. Dale County was established by a legislative act in 1824, and Ozark, settled primarily by farmers, became the county seat in 1870. It serves as a hub for communities across the Wiregrass, a region named for the long-stemmed grass that is native to the area. Its rich history and culture has found its way into art, music, food, and folklore.

Agriculture reigned as the most important segment of Ozark's economy until the outbreak of World War II and the establishment of Camp Rucker. The Camp became Fort Rucker in 1955 and was recently renamed Fort Novosel. Patriotism runs deep here. Fort Novosel is Alabama's largest military base and serves as the headquarters for U.S. Army Aviation.

Today, visitors can learn about the evolution of aviation at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum, and experience the sound of helicopters in flight.

Come visit us:

April 17 - June 21, 2024

Dowling Museum/Ann Rudd Art Center
144 E. Broad Street | Ozark, AL 36360
Downtown Ozark, on the Square

Hours and contact info:

Monday-Saturday: 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
Group and student tours by appointment.
facebook.com/RuddArtCenter
334.445.6526
ruddartcenter.org

Local programming and exhibits:

- Regional art and photography exhibits
- Local and Southern authors book signings and conversations
- "Dale County: Then & Now" exhibit at Dowling Museum
- Oral history and storytelling



Members of a rifle squad at Camp Rucker, then a new WWII infantry training center, 1942. Courtesy Alabama Department of Archives & History.

Meet us at the Crossroads

Crossroads: 2023-2024 Tour Dates

Cleveland (Blount County)

September 12 - October 28, 2023

White Hall (Lowndes County)

November 4 - December 9, 2023

Roanoke (Randolph County)

December 18, 2023 - February 2, 2024

Triana (Madison County)

February 14 - April 12, 2024

Ozark (Dale County)

April 17 - June 21, 2024

About the Alabama Humanities Alliance

Founded in 1974, the nonprofit Alabama Humanities Alliance serves as a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Through our grantmaking and public programming, we connect Alabamians to impactful storytelling, lifelong learning, and civic engagement. We believe the humanities can bring our communities together and help us all see each other as fully human. alabamahumanities.org

About Museum on Main Street

Museum on Main Street is a Smithsonian outreach program that engages small town audiences and brings attention to rural communities. We partner with state humanities councils to bring traveling exhibitions, educational resources, and programming to small towns across America through their own local museums, historical societies, and other cultural venues. museumonmainstreet.org

Rural Alabama: At A Glance

Alabama's top crop rankings (U.S.)

No. 2 in peanuts

No. 3 in timber

No. 5 in cotton

No. 6 in aquafarming

Rural Alabama's economic power (2022)

\$1.8 billion new capital investments

1,900 new and future jobs

Preserving Alabama wilderness

668,000 acres, national forests | 48,000 acres, state parks | 132,000 miles, freshwater | 3.6 million acres, wetlands



Did you know?

Since 1997, the Alabama Humanities Alliance has partnered with Museum on Main Street to bring 11 national Smithsonian exhibits to 57 communities across Alabama.

This exhibition is part of Museum on Main Street, a unique collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services, the Alabama Humanities Alliance, and our host communities. Background photo on this page by Mark Dauber. Corn painting by Katherine Shelton. 'At A Glance' sources: (1) Alabama Cooperative Extension System, American Farm Bureau Federation (2) Alabama Department of Commerce (3) USDA Forest Service, Alabama State Parks, Alabama Rivers Alliance.

Insert design by Armando Colunga and Liz Kleber Moye.