



# AMERICANS

The Smithsonian in Alabama: 2026-2027



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# ALABAMIANS, AMERICANS, AND AMERICAN INDIANS

The Smithsonian exhibit *Americans* will travel to five communities across the state in 2026-2027: Atmore, Wetumpka, Florence, Scottsboro, and Foley. The exhibit asks why American Indian names, images, and stories remain everywhere in U.S. life, and what that presence tells us about the deep, unresolved, and often contradictory relationship between Americans of different ancestries.

That question has a particular fit for Alabama for several reasons. Our state's name derives from a Native nation; the Poarch Band of Creek Indians is a sovereign Native nation within the state; Alabama recognizes a number of other tribes whose members live here today; and places such as Moundville, Oakville, and the Florence Mound remind us that indigenous history here is deep, complex, and ongoing.

**We are Americans.** There are more than 340 million of us, and we have shared experiences and history. We each also bring our individual experiences and personal histories. We Americans have a complicated past and as an archaeologist I see great value in learning from it: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

You probably had your first formal teaching about American Indians in the fourth grade, though you more than likely encountered images and stories at an even younger age. Your earlier experiences likely included the Thanksgiving holiday and the story of Pocahontas. Maybe you played cowboys and Indians. You surely encountered American Indian sports mascots, Land O'Lakes butter, and many other images.

Yet beyond those early lessons, stories, and visuals, many people know relatively little about the long and complex histories of American Indians. Take, for example, that broad term itself. There is no homogenous "Native American." Just like there is no one type of Alabamian, the land within our state has long been home to Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee/Creek, Yuchi, and others.

This exhibit asks what American Indian imagery, stories, and histories mean in our American life, and how they appear in our own communities today.

The answers will differ from place to place and person to person, and sharing our knowledge and experiences can lead to deeper understanding. In *Americans*, you will be asked to reconsider, with fresh eyes, four popular entry points to Native history: Thanksgiving, Pocahontas, the Trail of Tears, and the Battle of Little Bighorn. You'll then be invited to reflect on your own connections to Native names, images, and stories. Each provides an opportunity to learn a more comprehensive history and to confront common misconceptions.

This year, we Americans celebrate 250 years since the founding of the United States, which came at a great cost to American Indians. The story of this land did not begin in 1776, of course, and it certainly did not begin with Columbus. For millennia, Native peoples lived here in distinct societies and sovereign nations. They built communities, traded, formed alliances, governed themselves, cared for homelands, and, like peoples everywhere, experienced conflict and change. The *Americans* exhibit allows us to ask new questions about old stories, and examine changing attitudes toward American Indians through time. This exhibit is rooted in an intertwined history of peoples, and that history shapes our nation's ongoing debate over what it means to be an American.

In the rest of this guide, you'll read how five Alabama host communities will bring local perspectives to these national questions. These host communities will also remind us that American Indian communities are contemporary. They are our neighbors, grappling with the same issues we all do within our towns, schools, museums, landscapes, and memories. We invite you to join the exhibit at any of its stops across Alabama, to bring your own experiences to the conversation, and to think with us about what connects us, what we have inherited, and where we go from here.

By Philip J. Carr, Ph.D.  
Archaeologist and Professor,  
University of South Alabama

*Americans* project scholar,  
Alabama Humanities Alliance

Photo: Florence Mound, by Abraham Rowe

# AMERICANS IN ATMORE

September 16 – November 4, 2026

In southwest Alabama, the small town of Atmore neighbors a sovereign nation. Just a few miles up the road is the longtime reservation of the federally recognized Poarch Band of Creek Indians. The Poarch Creek Indians are descendants of a segment of the original Creek Nation, which once covered almost all of Alabama and Georgia. For those in Atmore, the Tribe is both friend and neighbor. Unlike many eastern Indian tribes, the Poarch Creek Indians were not removed from their tribal lands and have lived together for more than 200 years in and around the Atmore area.

Today, both town and Tribe share a passion and enthusiasm for a more vibrant community, county, and state. You can see evidence of that along Main Street Atmore, where the Poarch Creek Indians partnered with the nonprofit Pride of Atmore to historically restore, preserve, and renovate the Strand Theatre and Hardware Store — now known as the Encore at the Strand. It is here where *Americans* will be proudly displayed for all to come learn, and share.

## Local programming:

- Screenings at the Strand Theatre of *The Forgotten Creeks*, a documentary produced by Jacksonville State University and Alabama Public Television
- Historical art lessons by instructor Sherri Scott, incorporating Poarch Creek history and major events highlighted in *Americans*
- Displays of local and indigenous art

## VISIT THE EXHIBIT!

Encore at The Strand | 120 South Main Street | Atmore, AL 36502

## September 16 – November 4, 2026

- Monday-Wednesday-Friday: 10am-5pm
- Tuesday-Thursday: 5-7pm
- Weekends by appointment: 251.237.1112

## Public program:

Featuring Dr. Philip Carr  
September 14, 2026 | 5:30 p.m.

## Opening reception:

September 15, 2026 | 5:30pm

## More info:

251.237.1112 | [encoreatthestrand@gmail.com](mailto:encoreatthestrand@gmail.com)  
[encoreatthestrand.org](http://encoreatthestrand.org)



Our thanks to local sponsors and partners: Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Main Street Atmore; Atmore Area Chamber of Commerce; Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company of Atmore, Inc.; David's Catfish; Rolin's Construction; Creek Clean; Easter Seals; Escambia County Board of Education; Atmore Lions Club; Yellow Hats Lions Club; Atmore Rotary Club.

**Note:** Exhibit hours are subject to change and reservations are recommended for large groups. Reservations are also required for screenings of the hour-long documentary, *The Forgotten Creeks*.



# AMERICANS IN WETUMPKA

November 16 – December 18, 2026

Visitors to Wetumpka stand in a region shaped by thousands of years of indigenous history. Prior to present-day Wetumpka, Hickory Ground (*Oce Vpofv* or *Otciapofa*) served as the final tribal capital and one of the most important ceremonial centers of the Muscogee (*Mvskokeye*) Creek Nation — until the removal of Native peoples to Oklahoma during the 1830s Trail of Tears.

A few miles away, Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson preserves more than 10,000 years of Native American history. Long before European settlement, this area was a gathering place for indigenous communities. Later, it became an important French-*Alabama* (or *Alibamu*) trading post and a crossroads where Native American, European, and early American cultures met.

The stories presented in *Americans* connect to a larger history that can still be seen across Elmore County today — in place names, archaeological sites, and the enduring legacy of the Native peoples who lived, worked, and traded here long before Alabama's statehood.

## Local programming:

- **Nov. 4-7:** Alabama Frontier Days (Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson)
- **Nov. 16-Dec. 18:** Local Native American history display (Wetumpka Public Library)
- **Nov. 21:** "Our Native History" talk by Native American author Debra Hughey (The River Room)
- **Nov. 28:** "William Weatherford, Red Eagle" talk by historian John J. Gurner, site director of Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson (The River Room)
- **Dec. 5:** "The Creek War and its Lasting Impact" talk by Matthew R. Grey, tribal liaison at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park (The River Room)
- **Dec. 12:** "Native American Art and Representation in the Homeland" talk by Alex Colvin, exhibits and programs coordinator at Alabama Dept. of Archives & History (The River Room)

## VISIT THE EXHIBIT!

**Elmore County Museum**  
112 South Main Street  
Wetumpka, AL 36092

**November 16 – December 18, 2026**

• Monday-Saturday: 9am-3pm

## Open house reception:

November 16, 2026 | 4:30-6pm

## More info:

334-567-5097  
elmorecountymuseum@gmail.com  
elmorecohistory.org



Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson

*Our thanks to local programming partners and sponsors: Wetumpka Public Library, Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson State Park, Elmore County Historical Society, Alabama Genealogical Society, City of Wetumpka.*

# AMERICANS IN FLORENCE

January 11 – February 22, 2027

Native American history extends nearly 1,300 years in the Shoals region. The landscape has been shaped by indigenous practices that are still visible, and the people who live here today are proud of this deep-rooted history. While Native American history is celebrated through arts and culture, museums, landmarks, and festivals, this region also experienced Removal first-hand, with several routes proceeding directly through the Shoals area. The Florence community is excited to serve as hosts of *Americans*, with plans to incorporate our own rich and complex local history into elements and discussions of the national exhibit.

## Local programming:

- **Jan. 23:** Exhibit presentation with Anita Flanagan, enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (Florence Mound and Museum)
- **Feb. 6:** “Rivers, Rails & Roads: Transportation During Cherokee Removal,” with Amy Kostine, on her work with the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail
- **Feb. 11:** “Commemorations of Historic Sites Along the Trail of Tears,” with Sean Jacobsen, assistant professor at the University of North Alabama
- **Feb. 20:** “The Muscogee Creek Nation Experience on the Trail of Tears,” with Chris Haveman, assistant professor of history at the University of West Alabama (Florence Mound and Museum)
- **TBA:** Workshop on Native American genealogy, led by Jason Terrell, enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (Florence-Lauderdale Public Library)
- **TBA:** Community field trip to Wichahpi Commemorative Stone Wall (Tom’s Wall), led by Trace Hendrix. (Natchez Trace Parkway; transportation from Florence-Lauderdale Public Library)

Additional programs to be announced. Local pottery, artwork, and documents will also be on display with the exhibit, from the Florence Mound Museum and the Library’s Special Collections.

## VISIT THE EXHIBIT!

**Florence-Lauderdale Public Library**  
350 N. Wood Avenue  
Florence, AL 35630

**January 11 – February 22, 2027**

- Monday-Thursday: 10am-7pm
- Friday-Saturday: 10am-5pm
- Sunday: 1-5pm

**Note:** Guided tours will also be available at set times.

## Receptions:

Opening: January 14, 2027 | 5:30pm  
Closing: February 21, 2027 | 2pm

## More info:

256.764.6564 | [abby@flpl.org](mailto:abby@flpl.org) | [flpl.org](http://flpl.org)



Tom’s Wall, Florence. Photo by Abraham Rowe/Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area.

*Our thanks to local sponsors and partners: Florence Arts and Museums, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, City of Florence, University of North Alabama, Florence-Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau.*

# AMERICANS IN SCOTTSBORO

March 4 – April 22, 2027

Located in the Tennessee River Valley of Northeast Alabama, Scottsboro and Jackson County have a rich history that stretches back long before Alabama became a state. Indigenous peoples lived, traveled, and traded throughout the region, leaving a lasting impact on the area and its history.

The Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center works to preserve and share the stories of Jackson County and the people who have called it home. From Native American history and early settlement to the individuals, families, and events that shaped our community, the Heritage Center helps connect local history to the larger American story. *Americans* offers guests an opportunity to explore those connections and consider how communities like ours have helped form the nation we know today, while also encouraging conversations about history, identity, and shared experiences.

## Local programming:

The Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center will complement *Americans* with locally focused programming. For the latest updates, visit the Center's Facebook page: [facebook.com/ScottsboroHeritage](https://facebook.com/ScottsboroHeritage)

## VISIT THE EXHIBIT!

Scottsboro-Jackson  
Heritage Center  
208 South Houston Street  
Scottsboro, AL 35768

March 4 – April 22, 2027

Tuesday-Friday: 10am-3pm

## Opening reception:

March 6, 2027 | 1-3pm

## More info:

256.259.2122

[heritage@scottsboro.org](mailto:heritage@scottsboro.org)

[sjhc.us](http://sjhc.us)



Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center

*Our thanks to local community partners: Jackson County Historical Association: Scottsboro Public Library.*

**Note:** Reservations are recommended for large groups.

# AMERICANS IN FOLEY

April 30 – June 25, 2027

Foley is a fascinating place for the *Americans* tour to conclude. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Alabama's only federally recognized tribe, are descendants of the original Creek nation on these ancestral lands. Through strategic economic diversification and a commitment to self-determination, the Tribe has become a major contributor to Alabama's economy and tourism industry — and as a philanthropic donor to charitable nonprofits, educational programs, and community development projects statewide.

The Tribe's influence is acutely felt right here in Foley, where the Poarch Creek Indians own and operate OWA Parks & Resort, the final destination for *Americans'* statewide tour of Alabama. This rich local story, navigating the Tribe's journey from past to present, is one that we will tell alongside the *Americans* exhibit. Visitors will have meaningful opportunities to connect national themes with the unique history, culture, and living traditions of Native communities in Alabama — fostering greater understanding and appreciation of indigenous contributions to America, then and now.

## Local programming:

- Program and screening of *The Forgotten Creeks*, a documentary produced by Jacksonville State University and Alabama Public Television (OWA Theatre)
- Displays of local and indigenous art (Poarch Band of Creek Indians)

Visit [OWA.com](http://OWA.com) for up-to-date info!

## VISIT THE EXHIBIT!

OWA Parks & Resort  
101 South Owa Blvd.  
Foley, AL 36535

## April 30 – June 25, 2027

- Tuesday & Thursday: 10am-2pm
- By appointment:  
Monday-Wednesday-Friday:  
9am-5pm; Saturday: 10am-2pm

## Closing reception:

June 25, 2027 | 11am-2pm

## More info:

251.932.2122 (ext. 1501)  
[events@visitowa.com](mailto:events@visitowa.com)  
[visitOWA.com](http://visitOWA.com)



Dancer at a Poarch Creek Indians Pow Wow. Photo courtesy Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

*Our thanks to local community partners: City of Foley, Poarch Creek Indians Museum and Welcome Center.*

**Note:** Exhibit hours are subject to change and reservations are recommended for large groups.



# WE ARE ALL AMERICANS.

AMERICANS

September 16, 2026 – June 25, 2027

**Visit this Smithsonian traveling exhibit on its tour of Alabama!**

**Atmore | Encore at the Strand**

September 16 – November 4, 2026

**Wetumpka | Elmore County Museum**

November 16 – December 18, 2026

**Florence | Florence-Lauderdale Public Library**

January 11 – February 22, 2027

**Scottsboro | Scottsboro-Jackson  
Heritage Center**

March 4 – April 22, 2027

**Foley | OWA Parks & Resort**

April 30 – June 25, 2027

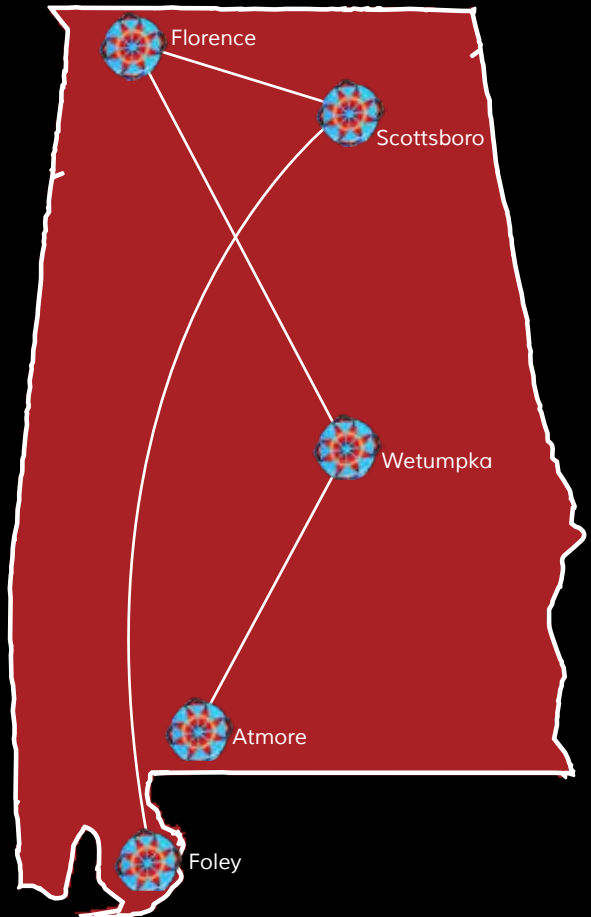
**How does the Smithsonian come to Alabama?**

Since 1997, the Alabama Humanities Alliance has partnered with the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street to bring 13 national exhibits to 75 communities (and counting!) across Alabama.

*Americans* is based on a major exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington, D.C. This traveling version of the exhibit is complemented with locally focused programming created by our host partners on this tour. Our hope is that the exhibit sparks local conversations about our own connections to, and understanding of, Native American history, culture, and identity right here in Alabama. Learn more at [alabamahumanities.org/americans](http://alabamahumanities.org/americans).

**Support for Americans**

*Americans* serves a focal point of the Alabama Humanities Alliance's America at 250 programming. Our thanks to the Poarch Band of Creek Indians for their presenting sponsorship of this exhibit. We are also grateful for the partnership of the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities at Auburn University, and the Alabama USA Semiquincentennial Commission.



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