

Many Voices, ★★★ ONE NATION

Many Voices, One Nation began as a permanent exhibition on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, exploring how *we* became U.S. Now, Alabamians can see locally customized versions of the exhibit right here in our state.

For America's 250th, AHA helped secure "starter kits" from the Smithsonian for a pair of local communities to create Alabama editions of the exhibit. AHA selected two partners to take on the project: the Dale County Council of Arts and Humanities, in Ozark, and the Washington County Museum, in Chatom. Each group's volunteers tailored the exhibit for their own community, building it from the ground up in coordination with the Smithsonian.

"Especially right now, as we celebrate America's semiquincentennial, this is a special opportunity to see how the stories of Alabama tie into the larger narrative of American history," says Chuck Holmes, AHA executive director.

Case in point: On June 26, the Washington County Museum and St. Stephens Historical Commission partnered to debut *Many Voices, One Nation: Alabama's First County*, at the Old Washington County Courthouse in St. Stephens Historical Park. The exhibit addresses local and national themes of expansion, freedom, inclusion, equality, migration, negotiation, and transformation. It explores the history of the U.S., and Washington County, through the lens of the many people who have called it home.

"I love that the people coming to view the exhibit are visiting with each other while they're here," says Sheri Bush, curator at the Washington County Museum. "They're talking about the things they know about local history. We are a rural county and *everyone* is connected in some way. We have already had repeat visitors who are bringing others back with them a second time!"

In Ozark, *Many Voices, One Nation: Voices of Dale County in the Wiregrass* opened on June 28 at the Dowling Museum/Ann Rudd Art Center. As part of the opening, the community also celebrated an exhibition of artwork

that's featured in the new book, *Spirit of Dale County: Celebrating Two Hundred Years*, by Helen Taylor Andrews and Carol Luckfield.

"The exhibit involved many hours of research and execution by numerous volunteers," says Frank Thompson, an artist, professor, and chair of the

Dale County Council of Arts and Humanities. "It tells a very memorable story about the many voices that have made this county, and area, the place it is."

Both exhibits will continue to tour their respective regions into 2027, with updated information posted on AHA's website. Developed by the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street and National Museum of American History, this project is made possible through the generous support of the Ford Foundation. Many thanks to our local sponsors, including the Alabama USA Semiquincentennial Commission, Wiregrass Foundation, ALA-TOM RC&D Council, and Wiregrass RC&D Council. 🏠



Opening reception for the *Many Voices, One Nation* exhibit in Ozark.