Smithsonian Institution

MUSEUM on Main Street

Stories from Main Street: Submission Rules

ABOUT THE STORIES FROM MAIN STREET PROJECT

Museum on Main Street (MoMS) empowers people to embrace their history and uncover their community's stories. In 2011, we began collecting those stories about life in small towns and rural communities across America.

To date, more than 1,200 people have saved their stories with us. We collect audio stories, photos, text, and videos about life in small-town America. These digital assets are preserved for future generations in a searchable Smithsonian database.

HOW DOES STORIES FROM MAIN STREET WORK? WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY?

A great story tells us about YOUR American experience. It could be a special memory from your childhood, an oral history from your grandparents, an anecdote about family life, or a story about a local gathering spot in your community. Help us uncover and celebrate what makes YOUR community unique by sharing your story today! For inspiration, you can browse our online collection for some great story examples, all submitted by people like you.

It's easy! Begin by visiting our Now Researching page. We will post themes and topics that we are currently researching. These topics will include questions about broad themes like food, work, or sports. Other questions will be focused on content that will enhance existing or future exhibitions. We will also occasionally feature questions or themes about individual states or towns. Themes will be posted for a limited period of time. Each will be geared to collect content for specific uses, including future exhibitions; feature articles and blog entries on this website; or education and exhibition projects developed in collaboration with state humanities councils and host museums.

Remember that we can only accept stories that are connected to our currently posted research themes. Contributions that are off-topic will not be considered for use in projects or features.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY STORY STAND OUT? WHAT CRITERIA WILL YOU USE FOR SELECTING STORIES?

We will feature the best stories that relate to our themes and rise to the highest standards of storytelling. Successful stories will:

- **Use multiple elements:** Consider illustrating your story with a short video or an interview with family or friends. Use images or video to show the people who are part of your story.

- **Clearly connect to our research topics**: Be sure to explain how your experience fits into the context of the national or local theme we're researching .We will be looking for stories that best illuminate our current research areas. Off-topic content cannot be accepted.

- **Connect to local history and culture:** The best stories will connect personal memories and experiences to a place and time. Tell us how your story illustrates something interesting or unique about your community.

- **Have style:** You've got the storytelling skills. Show them off! Be evocative. Tell us how your story makes you feel. Help us understand why this experience is so important to you, your family, or your community. Use a conversational tone—it's not a speech, it's your story.

- **Keep it brief:** Write out your story before you contribute it. Make sure it effectively gets your point across. If you're recording a video or audio segment, try to tell your story in a concise manner—about 3 to 5 minutes of content.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

Create your story. Then, visit our Share Your Story page to access the story upload tool. You will need to register before you can complete your upload. And, please be sure to read our Story Submission Rules (this document) and Terms and Conditions for Submissions before your post your story.

To submit a story to our collection, simply use our online form to submit your story narrative (text) as well as audio clips, video, and/or photographs. All stories are reviewed by Museum on Main Street staff, and select stories will be featured on our website and/or social media channels. Some stories may even be part of future Smithsonian traveling exhibitions!

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES TO READ BEFORE SENDING YOUR STORY

We are thrilled that you are considering submitting a story to our online collection. Before submitting your story, we ask that you review the following guidelines to ensure that your story will be submitted in a format that we can accept, review, and (hopefully) publish.

All decisions about the publication of submitted stories are at the sole discretion of the Museum on Main Street site administrators. Submission of your story via our online form does not guarantee publication on the website or other Smithsonian vehicles. You will be notified by email of the status of your submission after MoMS administrators have reviewed and processed your story. You can increase the chances that your story will be selected for publication by adhering to all requirements and guidelines listed below:

ONLY SUBMIT STORIES YOU KNOW YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO PUBLISH

If you are submitting the story on behalf of someone else, please make sure you receive permission from the person or entity who owns the content and intellectual property rights for the material(s) you will be submitting. While you will retain ownership of your submission, by submitting content you give the Smithsonian (and those authorized by the Smithsonian) permission to use it for educational, promotional, or other non-commercial purposes. For additional details, please refer to our Terms and Conditions for Submissions.

BE SURE TO READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL TERMS OF USE

Before submitting your story, please check all of your story materials (including narratives, photographs, audio, and/or video) to ensure they comply with the MoMS website Terms and Conditions for Submissions (available under the About menu) as well as the Smithsonian Institution's Privacy Policy and Terms of use (accessible via links in the footer of our website). Some important restrictions to be aware of are:

- Children under the age of 18 are not permitted to register or submit stories to the website. For student projects, such as those completed under the Museum on Main Street Youth Access Grant Program, only a teacher, parent, or guardian may register and submit stories on behalf of a child under 18.

- We also prohibit the submission of story materials that include full names, photographs, or other personally identifiable information of children who are currently under the age of 18, unless you have obtained prior written consent from a parent or legal guardian. Please note that *historical* photos of young children (provided they are no longer under age 18) are acceptable. If your images, videos, or audios include children who are currently under the age of 18, you must upload written parental consent (e.g. signed release form) prior to uploading the file(s). A parent/guardian and participant release form can be downloaded here.

- You may also choose to obtain the permission of any other people who appear in a photograph or video that you include in your story and keep a copy of their consent in your personal records. A participant release form for images can be downloaded here.

- You will not submit content that is off-topic, partisan-political, contains personal attacks or expletives, or is otherwise abusive, threatening, unlawful, harassing, discriminatory, libelous, obscene, false, pornographic, or that infringes on the rights of any third party.

INFORMATION NEEDED TO SUBMIT YOUR STORY

You can submit your story in just a few easy steps. But, you'll need to have some important information available when you begin using the Share Your Story form. The following is a list of fields included in the story submission form, with specific format requirements noted. Please be sure to read and follow all instructions noted below. Stories not meeting the format, file size, or length requirements may be disqualified from consideration for publication on the site.
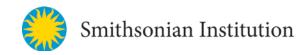
Step	Field	Instructions
Step 1	Storyteller's Name	(*Optional*) WHO is telling this story? **PLEASE NOTE:** • Please leave this blank OR include just a first name if the storyteller does not want their full name provided to the public. • If you are submitting this story on behalf of another person, please make sure you have permission to share his/her name and any story materials you are uploading. • If your storyteller is a child currently under the age of 18, you MUST leave this field blank unless you have received prior written consent from the child's parent or guardian. A release form is available here.
	Subject	In 10 words or less, describe the subject of your story. Examples: • *Covered bridges of Lancaster County* • *My job as a paperboy in the 1950s* • *History of Lake Winnipesaukee*
	Time Period	(*Optional*) If this story relates to a specific historical time period, enter it here. Examples: • World War II • *The 1960s* • *The Great Depression*
	Location	(*Optional*) If this story relates to a specific city, town, or state, enter it here. Please ONLY enter a location if it is actually relevant to the story being told.
Step 2	Story Narrative	Add a written narrative that describes your story. Please include a brief summary here even if you will be submitting additional media files.

Step	Field	Instructions
		NOTE: Narratives should be edited to 500 words or less. Longer narratives may be submitted as PDF files under the "Media Files" area below.
	Media Files and Captions	You may submit up to 5 media files to support your story. **Accepted Formats:** _(see table below)_ **IMPORTANT:** • Audio & video files should be edited to 3-5 minutes or less. • Please edit media files to remove any personal or sensitive information such as addresses, emails, and phone numbers. • Media files may NOT include full names, photographs, or other personally identifiable information of children currently under the age of 18, unless you have obtained prior written consent from each child's parent or guardian. A release form is available here. • After uploading each media file, please enter a descriptive caption (up to 100 characters).
	External Project Link	(Optional) If your story cannot be easily formatted to meet the requirements listed above, and is already published on another website, you may enter the full (permanent) URL here.

Accepted Formats:

Media Type	Format(s)	Size Limit	Additional Requirements
Images	JPG, PNG	10 MB	- At least 1280x960 resolution (preferred) - Compress with "high" quality setting
Audio	MP3	20 MB	Edit to 3 min. or less
Video	MP4	100 MB	- At least 1280x720 resolution (preferred) - Edit to 3 min. or less - Compress using H.264 video codec
Documents	PDF	10 MB	File should be "ready to publish" (edited for spelling, grammar, etc.)

HELPFUL TOOLS FOR FORMATTING YOUR MEDIA FILES

Worried about how to edit, compress, and save your media files in the correct format? You don't have to be a professional or have access to expensive editing software. Below is a list of just a few free or (relatively) low-cost tools to try. For those software tools that aren't free, many offer a free trial period to let you "try before you buy." This list is by no means exhaustive, so if you already have a favorite software tool that's not on this list, please feel free to use it!

Media Type	Required Format(s)	Software Tools
Images	JPG, PNG	Adobe Photoshop Elements** Windows Paint*
Audio	MP3	Adobe Audition Sony Sound Forge Audio Studio Audacity*

Video	MP4	**Editing:**
		    Adobe Premiere Elements
		    Wondershare Filmora
		    Microsoft Windows Movie Maker*
		    iMovie (Mac)*
		Converting/Compressing:
		    Wondershare Video Converter*
		    VisualHub Video Converter (Mac)*

Documents	PDF	Microsoft Word (save as PDF) Adobe Acrobat

* free options

PLEASE NOTE: The list above is provided for informational purposes only and is NOT intended to serve as an endorsement or list of Smithsonian-preferred tools. For assistance with any of the above software tools, please consult with the software manufacturer. In addition, the web (in particular YouTube) is a great resource for finding video software tutorials. Whether you're a complete novice or advanced user, you can probably find an online tutorial to answer your questions and move your skills to the next level!

TIPS FOR MOBILE DEVICE USERS

- If you have captured your photo, video, or audio on a mobile device, you may be able to crop, trim, or perform other basic editing tasks directly on the device. However, you may find it easier to transfer the original media file to a desktop or laptop computer where it can be further manipulated

(and compressed / saved in the correct format) using one of the software options listed above.   The file transfer can be accomplished by plugging the device into a computer (usually through a USB port and the charging cable that came with the device). Alternatively, most devices offer "sharing" options that allow you to email a file to yourself for further manipulation.

- Images taken from an iPhone or iPad can be emailed to yourself without having to plug the device into a computer. When using this method, we recommend selecting the "large" option to meet our minimum recommended photo resolution. No further manipulation of the image should be needed in this case.

- Videos from iPhone or iPad can be emailed to yourself using the "MailDrop" option. You will need to use a video converter tool to compress and convert the movie to the required MP4 format.

- Audio can be recorded on an iPhone or iPad using the "Voice Memos" app. As with other media, you can then email it to yourself and use an audio converter tool to compress and convert the audio to the required MP3 format.

HOW DO I REMOVE A STORY I'VE ALREADY SUBMITTED FROM YOUR WEBSITE?

To request removal of your user account, or to request removal of a story you have submitted that you no longer wish to be published or archived on the website, please contact the MoMS staff at 202.633.5335 or moms@si.edu.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

If you have reviewed the above information and still have questions about the story submission process, please feel free to reach out to the MoMS team. We look forward to hearing from you!

Museum on Main Street / Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Email: moms@si.edu | **Phone:** 202.633.5335 | **Fax:** 202.633.5344

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