



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Altria Group to Sponsor Major Exhibition, “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times” at the Virginia Historical Society

Featuring costumes and accessories from the hit PBS series

Richmond – The Virginia Historical Society is pleased to announce that Altria Group has agreed to sponsor the VHS’s newest exhibit, “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times.”

The nationally touring exhibit will run from October 2015 into January 2016 and will be shown in the VHS’s newly created changing exhibition space, one of the project goals of its \$38-million “Story of Virginia Campaign.”

The exhibition consists of 35 costumes and accessories from the popular PBS MASTERPIECE Classic program. Visitors will be able to explore the lives of Downton’s aristocratic inhabitants and their servants during the World War I period.

“Altria has a long history of support for the arts,” said Jack Nelson, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Altria Group, and Board Vice Chairman, Virginia Historical Society. “And we are pleased to support the Virginia Historical Society as it brings traveling exhibitions like ‘Dressing Downton’ to our hometown. This exhibition will be a great draw for residents and visitors alike.”

“We are excited to have Altria Group sponsor this nationally touring exhibition of Downton Abbey costumes,” said Paul Levensgood, President and CEO of the Virginia Historical Society. “There are many real-life American connections to Downton Abbey, and this exhibition complements the VHS mission to bring our history to life. During the late 19th century, and right up to the outbreak of World War I, hundreds of American women visited England and Europe hoping to marry aristocrats. The series character, Lady Cora, the Countess of Grantham is one such American woman.”

The exhibition and the two major exhibitions that follow it are part of the \$38-million “Story of Virginia Campaign,” of which more than \$31 million has been raised.

“The Story of Virginia Campaign” is designed to help the VHS better utilize portions of its existing facility. This will allow for the display of even more of the Society’s collections as well as hosting more and larger events and exhibitions.

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Future changing exhibitions will include “The Art of Seating: 200 years of American Design,” which will feature works by John Henry Belter, George Hunzinger, Herter Brothers, Stickley Brothers, Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles & Ray Eames, Isamu Noguchi, and Frank Gehry and many more.

“Pro Football Hall of Fame: Gridiron Glory,” another upcoming VHS changing exhibition, will highlight such storied objects as the Super Bowl trophy, a 1917 game ball used by Jim Thorpe and the Canton Bulldogs, Tom Dempsey’s famous kicking shoe created for his half foot, Mean Joe Greene’s jersey, and more than 200 other items from the sport’s rich history, normally housed at the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Admission to each of these special exhibitions is free for Virginia Historical Society members.

The Altria Group sponsorship of “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times” is part of a \$250,000 total commitment that also includes support for the installation of a new “Story of Virginia” exhibition, which is slated to open in late summer 2015. Altria Group has been a major supporter of the VHS and the “Story of Virginia” exhibition since its first iteration in 1992, as well as leading the charge for its transformation to an online exhibition in the early 2000s. Altria Group’s most recent commitment will help the Virginia Historical Society make Virginia’s history relevant, exciting, and accessible to present and future generations.

The “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times” exhibition is designed by Exhibits Development Group in cooperation with Cosprop Ltd., London.

The **Virginia Historical Society** (VHS)—a privately funded nonprofit organization—collects, preserves, and interprets the Commonwealth’s history, linking past with present to inspire future generations. Visitors may connect with the 8.5 million objects in the VHS collection through the research library, a variety of programs, and a recently redesigned website to learn more about the unparalleled story of Virginia. Exciting plans are underway to expand and improve VHS exhibitions. The transformation of gallery spaces will create even more vibrant, accessible, and engaging gateways to America’s past. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. for the library, museum shop and a variety of programs. The VHS is closed on Sunday. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit www.vahistorical.org, or connect with the VHS on Facebook and Twitter.

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