

The American Elm that Grew Along with America



How big is it?

Trunk Circumference: **17.75 feet (5.4m)**

Crown Spread: **116.5 feet (35.5m)**

Height: **80 feet (24.4m)**

American elms are native to eastern North America

and were planted extensively throughout the United States in the 1700s and 1800s. From the earliest plans for the National Mall, elm trees were the unifying element that linked the parks, avenues, and monument grounds. Around 1930, the devastating Dutch Elm Disease fungus was introduced to the U.S. and killed millions of elms throughout the country.

Today, great elms like this tree in front of you still persist, either through natural resistance to the disease, proactive maintenance and disease control programs, or a combination of both. This American elm is well cared for by Smithsonian Gardens' staff and is the first tree cataloged in the Smithsonian Gardens Tree Collection, a living museum collection of thousands of trees.

This American elm (*Ulmus americana*) is one of the oldest and most majestic trees on the Smithsonian grounds. It was planted around 1850, well before the opening of the National Museum of Natural History in 1910. Known as the Smithsonian Witness Elm, this tree has seen many momentous events pass between the White House and U.S. Capitol during its lifetime.

1909



Center Market vendors staged along B street (now Constitution Avenue) in front of Natural History Building

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Image #2002-10673

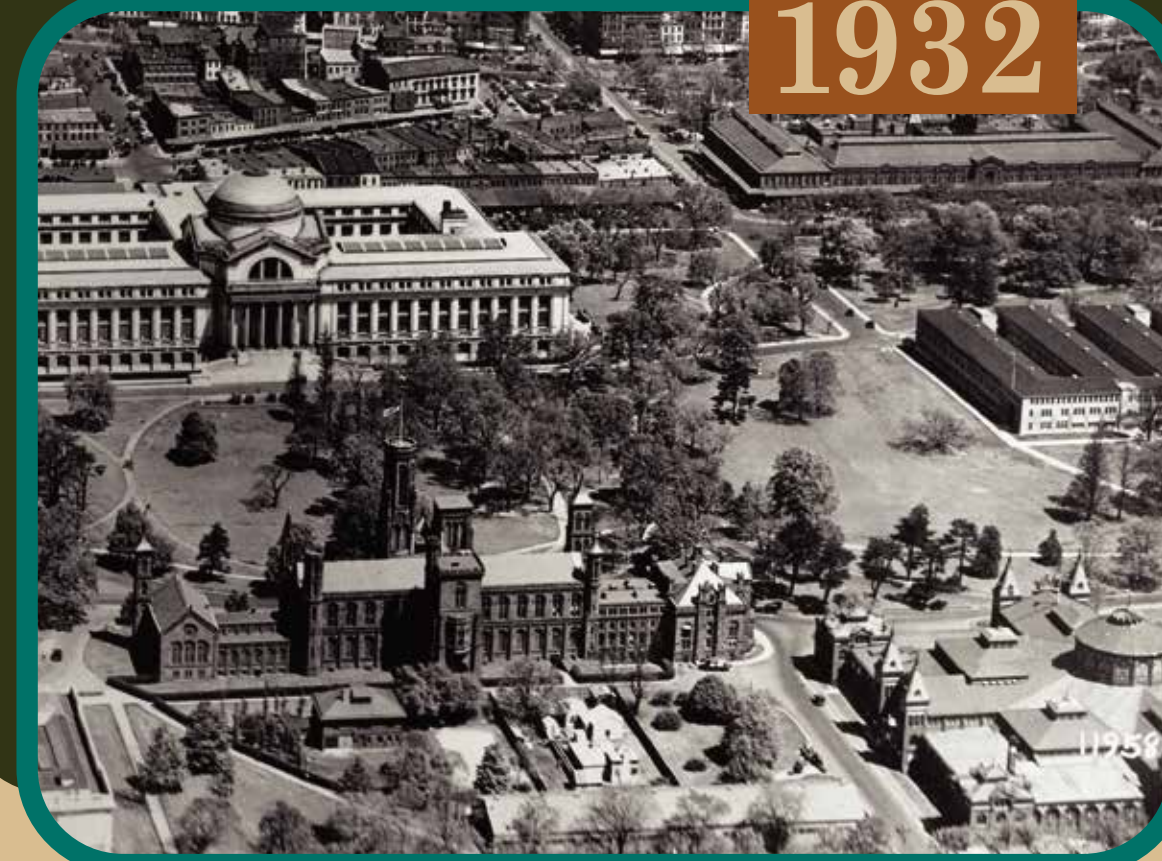
1932



Construction of National Archives Building on former site of Center Market with Natural History Building in the background

National Archives and Records Administration, 5928152

1932



View of National Mall (with Natural History Building and Center Market at top) before trees were cleared to return Washington to the L'Enfant plan

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Image #MAH-21935

1942



Washington, D.C. Memorial Day parade. One of the many parades, marches, and heads of state that have passed by the Smithsonian Witness Elm

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