

Welcome to Museum on Main Street!

We are delighted to welcome you as the project scholar for your state humanities council's Museum on Main Street tour of *Between Fences*. Museum on Main Street, or MOMS, is a one of a kind cultural project that serves the people of rural America. MOMS is a collaboration of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), the Federation of State Humanities Councils, state humanities councils across the country and cultural organizations in small, rural communities.

Background:

One-fifth of all Americans live in rural areas and one-half of all U.S. museums are located in small towns. Museum on Main Street seeks to provide these institutions with access to resources they may not otherwise have and to assist them in making lasting improvements to advance their museums' objectives. MOMS combines the prestige of Smithsonian exhibitions, the program expertise of state humanities councils, and the remarkable volunteerism and unique histories of small rural towns. Since it began in 1994, MOMS exhibitions have traveled to over 506 towns with populations of 500 to 20,000 in 38 states.

Museum on Main Street's exhibitions focus on broad topics of national history and give host museums the opportunity, with support from state humanities councils, to create their own educational programs, cultural activities, and exhibitions that center on their local heritage. Consisting of freestanding kiosks and original objects, the exhibitions have been specifically designed to address the space and staffing constraints of small cultural institutions. Kiosks travel in easy-to-handle wheeled crates and can be assembled and disassembled with minimal effort. Exhibition support materials and "how to" training workshops are provided to venues hosting the exhibitions.

The Museum on Main Street's website, www.museumonmainstreet.org, has detailed information for potential venues, the general public, and members of the press, including tour schedules and educational resources for each exhibition. State and local Museum on Main Street coordinators and state project scholars are also able to use the site as a key administrative and assistance tool.

Museum on Main Street has been made possible through the generous support of the United States Congress. Additional funding has been made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Hearst Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution Special Exhibition Fund, and the Smithsonian Institution Educational Outreach Fund.

The Role of the Scholar

State humanities councils are expected to use one or more humanities scholars in the implementation of their Museum on Main Street exhibition tour. Depending on the exhibition topic and the council's and the venues' interests, one or more scholars may be chosen in any number of diverse fields of the humanities. The overarching intention of using a project scholar is to help local venues with the development of locally-based ancillary exhibitions, community activities and public educational programs that expand on the Smithsonian exhibition's central themes. In order to avoid the project being overly packaged and "top-down," it is critical that venues take direct ownership of the project. Ideally, the state project scholar is essential to this process, working hand-in-hand with

local organizers to craft exhibitions and activities that are expressions of their unique history and experience. In addition, project scholars have been used by participant councils in a wide variety of ways:

- as lecturers at exhibition openings
- to develop educational resources for teachers/students
- as contributors to state-based websites
- as authors of exhibition-related essays for academic journals and state council newsletters
- as frequent respondents to statewide media.

State scholars are expected to attend a national program planning meeting for the exhibition tour (usually scheduled 18-12 months before the exhibition arrives in the state) and to participate in an in-state program planning workshop (approximately 9 months before the exhibition opens) and installation workshop (just prior to the exhibition opening). All travel costs are covered by the project. Each state council will work out a contractual agreement with their state scholar(s) to determine the level of participation and compensation for the project. All project scholars are recognized on the project web site, www.museumonmainstreet.org.

Resources:

This section of the website is intended to assist you in your job as a project scholar for the *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* exhibition. It contains detailed information about the exhibition's themes and physical structure. It also provides ideas and resources to supplement local exhibitions and humanities programs. Your job, as project scholar, is to build upon these resources in helping local hosts add their story to the *New Harmonies* theme, and to help them place their story in the larger, state-wide story.

Thank you for your willingness to lend your expertise and assistance to this unique program. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your state coordinator, or LuAnn Kern, Museum on Main Street Co-Director/States at luannkern@comcast.net or 517-242-8005.