

Between Fences

Ideas for Local Exhibitions and Programs

The following is a preliminary list of ideas for humanities programming and local exhibitions in conjunction with the MoMS exhibition, *Between Fences*.

Local Exhibition Ideas

- ◆ Explore how Native Americans in your area marked their land and territory. What kinds of "fences" did they use or need? What were Native American boundaries prior to white settlement? How was their idea of property and ownership different than white settlers?

- ◆ Explore how the first European settlers in your area dealt with Native Americans. Explore the first homes that settlers built and how they took possession of their property through building fences, fields, etc. Is there evidence of any other means of taking possession of land besides building on it?

- ◆ Look at a specific type of fence (e.g. stone, hedge) in terms of why they were used and how they functioned. Look at a specific type of fences in terms of the environment and industry. What materials were used and why?

- ◆ Explore your community history in relation to the Homestead Act. Who settled the town? Where did they come from? Are their descendants still in town? How was the land surveyed and divided up? Exhibition could incorporate some of the earliest documents of the settlement, surveying equipment, etc.

- ◆ Could your area have been settled, could it have grown, without fences?

- ◆ Examine the original land survey for the county/area. How has it changed through the years? Are there property lines that still reflect the original land survey? Are there parcels of land that are still in the same family?

- ◆ Look at how the uses of the land alter the environment.

- ◆ What happens when nature and wildlife don't respect our man-made divisions of property? Do we have a responsibility to see that migrating animals can find passage? Who is responsible for the costs in maintaining natural wildlife resources on private property?

- ◆ Closing of the range: how did it happen locally? Who were/are the players? What were/are the sides in the debates? What were/are their interests? Is this fight over or is it still going on? Who won or is winning? Why?

- ◆ Access to land. Who in the past and today is closing access to land? Why? How? Access to land and access to resources is another issue – practical and philosophical. Does owning real estate give you control over your piece of land all the way to the earth's core and how high into the sky?

- ◆ Look at local fences and remains of fences. Who built them? When? Why? Look at

boundaries that have no fences. Why? What is the oldest fence in town? Who built it?

- ◆ Explore cemetery fences and cemetery plot fences (which were a fad at one time) as a way of looking at their history.
- ◆ Explore local fence manufacturing and how it has changed over the years. Did a particular industry or company in the community play a significant role in fence production? In the nineteenth and twentieth century where did local people get their fencing materials? Have fencing styles changed through the years as different materials became available?
- ◆ Neighbor relations. Depending on how personal you want to get, look at how fences allow you to pursue happiness and live peacefully (or not) with the people around you.

Artifacts to collect: commercial fence literature, fence tools (stretcher, crimper, splicer), old and new photographs of fences in community; articles from local newspaper archives about fence and property issues; types of barbed wire; etc.

Ideas for Humanities Programming and Community Events

- ◆ Conduct essay contests on the following themes or questions:
 - ◆ What would you fence in and why? What would you fence out? What existing fences would you take down and why?
 - ◆ Provide images of specific types of local fences. What do these fences mean to you and why?
 - ◆ Do fences make good neighbors? Why, why not?
 - ◆ Why is picket fence traditionally white?
- ◆ Community building project: construct a worm fence.
- ◆ Community picket fence: local museum sells plain “pickets” as a fundraiser. Families, local groups (boy scout troupes, etc.) purchase the pickets and decorate them according to whatever themes the museum identifies. The decorated pickets are collected and assembled onto a picket fence frame on the museum grounds. The community votes for the winning pickets. Possible themes: family history, local history, state story, most creative, etc.
- ◆ Contest: Fences have been made of stone, wood and steel, and there are even now invisible fences. What will fences of the future be made of? (Liquid fence, see www.liquidfence.com)
- ◆ Photo essay and oral history of fences in county. Research history of area fences and the people who owned the land they contained.
- ◆ Mystery fence: post photos of local fences in paper. Have readers identify fence. Following week, post identification and history of the fence in paper.
- ◆ Fence scavenger hunt—identify different types of fences in county/town.
- ◆ Community Discussion/Forum Issues:
 - ◆ If local communities have need for training in conflict resolution, such programs

could revolve around fence history.

- ◆ Fences and their effect on the health and happiness of animals.
 - ◆ For border-states: look at the cross-border relationships that exist or don't exist.
 - ◆ How communities react to sprawl.
 - ◆ A look at the gated community phenomenon.
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- ◆ Reading/Discussion Programs: to be provided