

Produce for Victory helps Meridian, MS celebrate July 4th

On July 4, over 1,000 people crowded into Meridian's historic train depot for the opening



ceremony of the Museum on Main Street exhibition, *Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front, 1941-1945*. The ceremony opened dramatically with a loud, two-strain whistle from the Meridian-Jackson train, the line that transported soldiers to and from the war front during the 1940s, as it pulled into the station. Guests and speakers included Senator Thad Cochran, Congressman Ronnie Shows, former Congressman Sonny Montgomery, Governor Ronnie Musgrove, Meridian's Mayor John Robert Smith, and many others, including those from local fire and police departments, and Anna Cohn, SITES' Director.

The highlight of the evening was the "roll call" of living home front heroes, selected by the seven Mississippi communities that have hosted the exhibition during the past year. As their specific contributions were recounted, each home front hero was escorted on stage and thanked personally by the elected officials and other guests. A subject explored by the exhibition, the recognition of these home front heroes made history come alive for many in the audience. Among those chosen was **Ethel Kelly (pictured above)**, the model for the oft-cited example of home front courage and hustle, Rosie the Riveter. She worked the four to midnight shift at the Lockheed Martin plant during World War II, repairing wing sections of fighter planes. The youngest home front hero honored was 82, and the oldest, Kelly, is 89.

Hosted by the Memory Tree Foundation, *Produce for Victory* is one of a series of exhibitions circulating nationally as part of Museum on Main Street, a collaborative partnership between SITES and state humanities councils across the country in cooperation with the Federation of State Humanities Councils. Major funding to date has been provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Hearst Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Generous support has also been provided by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution's Special Exhibitions Fund and Educational Outreach Fund.