



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Deena Pyle | Utah Humanities Communications Director | 801.201.4300

## **Smithsonian Exhibition, *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* Opens in Blanding to Explore the Future and Sustainability of Rural Communities**

August 13, 2024 – As part of *Crossroads*, a statewide exploration of life and change in rural Utah, the M.T. Hurst Foundation and [Utah State University Blanding](#) announce a collaboration with [Utah Humanities](#) to bring [Crossroads: Change in Rural America, a Museum on Main Street \(MoMS\) exhibition](#) from the [Smithsonian Institution](#) on a tour stop to Blanding.

### **EXHIBITION KICKOFF CELEBRATION IN BLANDING**

Please join the M.T. Hurst Foundation and Utah State University Blanding, along with their community partners, to welcome the Smithsonian exhibition *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* to Blanding from August 26 to October 12, 2024 at the Health Science & Library Building on the USU Blanding campus.

#### ***Crossroads* Exhibition Kickoff Celebration**

**AUGUST 30, 2024 | 6:00pm to 7:30pm**

**USU Health Science & Library Building | 576 W 200 S, Blanding, Utah**

**Please join us for short remarks at 6:30pm and enjoy light refreshments as you peruse the exhibition**

### **CROSSROADS COMPANION EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMMING**

The Smithsonian's *Crossroads* is a traveling exhibition that provokes fresh thinking and sparks conversations about the future and sustainability of rural communities. *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* offers small towns a chance to look at their own paths over the past century – to highlight the changes that affected their fortunes, explore how they have adapted, and think about what's next.

Utah Humanities is touring *Crossroads* to eight Utah communities from September 2023 to December 2024. Community organizations are partnering with Utah Humanities to host the exhibition and connect their local stories through companion exhibits and programming.

*Crossroads* will be in Blanding from August 26 to October 12, 2024. As an accompaniment to the Smithsonian exhibition, a local companion exhibit, *Our Homegrown Heritages: Past, Present, and Future* will focus on the culture of San Juan County and feature its unique history, geography, and diversity. In addition, *San Juan County Crossroads* features San Juan School District's writing contest, which asked students to focus on the heritage of their families and communities.

Public programming related to the exhibition is already underway this summer and will continue with a community discussion about the legacy of mining, a lecture about the tensions between the ideals and realities of life in rural Utah, an author presentation of the book *Bears Ears: Landscape of Refuge and Resistance*, as well as a drop-in family art activity with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. In addition, interviews with County residents are airing on Utah Public Radio as part of their [Rural Utah at a Crossroads](#) project. Complete details on *Crossroads* in Blanding are available at the [Blanding Crossroads Facebook page](#), at [Utah Humanities](#), and in this [schedule of public events](#).

**Ellen Horiuchi Williams, President of the M.T. Hurst Foundation**, is the project director for *Crossroads* in Blanding. She shares that, "*Hosting Crossroads is a great opportunity for our community to grow together. In such a remote section of the state, there is a tendency for isolation and exclusion. It is also a county with numerous cultural splits. Crossroads can increase the dialogue between disparate groups in the community as well as increase collaboration among major*

*towns in the County. Crossroads can serve as a bridge-building catalyst that can lead to more integration of ideas as we gaze into the future of rural San Juan County."*

**Bayley Hedglin, Associate Director of Development at Utah State University Blanding**, which is the presentation partner for *Crossroads* in San Juan County, says that, *"At Utah State University Blanding, our mission is to provide technical and higher education to those who live in the Four Corners region. Part of this mission is to celebrate the history, places, and cultures of those who call San Juan County home. The Crossroads: Change in Rural America exhibition offers an incredible opportunity to document and honor the rich cultural heritage of our area while also addressing the challenges we face in building and sustaining our communities. We are excited to partner with the Smithsonian and Utah Humanities to bring this exhibition to Blanding and to facilitate meaningful conversations about our future."*

**Megan van Frank, Director of the Center for Community Heritage at Utah Humanities**, is coordinating the exhibition tour in Utah. In explaining the role Utah Humanities plays in bringing the Smithsonian to Utah, she says, *"We are proud to bring the Crossroads exhibition to eight communities around the state in 2023-2024. This collaboration among national, state, and local organizations strengthens Utah's cultural community and helps preserve and share Utah history. We work closely with host sites to leverage the national exhibition to bring focus to their own experiences and bring context to an understanding of rural identity, land, and community."* Van Frank hopes that *"visitors to the Crossroads exhibition will come away with an appreciation for the tension between cherished ideals and challenging realities of life in rural Utah. The exhibition and each local project is an opportunity for Utahns to explore change and adaptation in rural America and Utah as part of local, state, and national conversations."*

**Professor Greg Smoak of the University of Utah is the consulting scholar for the Utah tour of the Crossroads exhibition.** He says, *"Utah is an urban place with a rural heart. The vast majority of our state's population lives in the densely populated cities of the Wasatch Front. Yet, if pressed, many of those urban dwellers might hesitate to think of themselves as city folk. That is because rural life holds deep and resilient meanings for many Americans, especially here in Utah. Contemporary pressures that drive change may seem daunting, yet adaptation has always been core to rural life in Utah. The changes and challenges facing small communities today are not unprecedented, and considering the ways Utahns have navigated decision points in the past might help us think about the future of rural Utah."*

**Terri Cobb, Registrar at Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service / Smithsonian Affiliations** remarks that *"Crossroads: Change in Rural America is part of the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program, a unique collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), state humanities councils, and local host institutions. We are proud to be partnering with Utah Humanities to bring Crossroads to eight communities across Utah throughout the next year. Crossroads takes a broad look at the characteristics of rural America. It explores how an attraction to and interaction with the land formed the basis of rural America and how rural communities and small towns evolve. It also highlights how change has transformed rural America and how rural Americans are evolving for the future."*

To learn more about the statewide tour, contact Utah Humanities at 801.359.9670 or visit the [Utah Humanities website](#).

*Crossroads: Change in Rural America is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution, Utah Humanities, and the M.T. Hurst Foundation in partnership with Utah State University Blanding.*

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