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JOHN WESLEY POWELL
RIVER HISTORY MUSEUM



For Immediate Release

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

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

June 18, 2024 – As part of *Crossroads*, a statewide exploration of life and change in rural Utah, the [John Wesley Powell River History Museum](#) announces 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 through Utah.

Utah Humanities is touring *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* to eight Utah communities from September 2023 to December 2024. Community organizations will partner with Utah Humanities to host the exhibition and connect their local stories through companion exhibits and public 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* 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.

Crossroads will enjoy a stay in Green River from June 29 to August 18, 2024 at the John Wesley Powell River History Museum.

Grand Opening of *Crossroads* in Green River, Utah

JUNE 29, 2024 | 10:00am-1:30pm

John Wesley Powell River History Museum | 1765 East Main Street, Green River, UT 84525

10:00am | Explore the Exhibitions

11:00am | Opening Remarks & Lecture

1:00pm | Refreshments on the Patio

Come help celebrate the Green River opening of *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* and a local companion exhibition *Crossing the Green: Community at a Crossroads?* Join us for welcoming remarks and a lecture with University of Utah historian Professor Gregory E. Smoak (state scholar for *Crossroads*), who will discuss the tensions between ideals and realities of life in rural Utah as change – past and present – affects its communities.

As an accompaniment to the Smithsonian's *Crossroads* exhibition, a local companion exhibit called *Crossing the Green: Community at a Crossroads?* seeks to inspire thought and conversation on the fundamental questions posed by the challenges and opportunities rural residents face. The interrogatory style explores past and present conditions in the area to use as both a comparative and inspirational lens to think about the future. Researched and designed by museum curator, Elayne Hinsch, with assistance from graphic designer, Hayley Crooks, *Crossing the Green* will continue at the museum through the spring of 2025.

Additional details about the *Crossroads* project in Green River are available at the [John Wesley Powell River History Museum](#) and [Utah Humanities](#), and in [this event schedule](#).

Janet Everts Smoak, Executive Director of the John Wesley Powell River History Museum, says, *“Crossroads affords local residents of Green River a rare opportunity to recognize their experiences as a part of a rural identity found across the nation. “Rural and Proud” is a catchphrase of our local partner Epicenter and it epitomizes the attitude and generational perseverance it takes to call Green River home.”*

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 sector 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 Gregory E. 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, the Utah tour liaison for Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service 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 John Wesley Powell River History Museum.

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