

HERITAGE WORKS!

CASE STUDIES FROM OREGON HERITAGE



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

History: Made by You

Visitors take in the *Rhythm of the Rails* exhibit at the Medford Railroad Show.



The Southern Oregon Historical Society created *History: Made by You* in 2009 as a response to feedback from our local audiences. During a series of public forums, community members vocalized their desire for a more participatory museum focusing on relevant local history topics and displaying more objects from the collection. *History: Made by You* emerged as an interactive outreach program through which SOHS staff partner with local groups to create community-focused traveling exhibitions that are installed in public locations throughout Jackson County.

History: Made by You accomplishes five major goals:

1. Make history more accessible by increasing the public's knowledge and understanding
2. Create a connection between individuals and their local history by emphasizing the link between the past and present
3. Incorporate local community members into the exhibition development process in a participatory and hands-on setting
4. Provide an alternative method of exhibition objects outside of the traditional museum setting
5. Reach local audiences otherwise underserved by SOHS's current activities and programming

Each project follows a similar format. A community group volunteers to participate in the project, and community members gather for a public forum. Forum attendees engage in conversations about their community, focusing on internal changes and dissecting the deeper roots of those issues. The forum concludes with participants choosing one aspect of their community to explore as an exhibition topic. SOHS staff partner with volunteers from the community to research the topic, select artifacts and photographs, write labels, design the layout, and choose installation locations. Once completed, the exhibition travels to four locations throughout Jackson County and remains on display for four months.

TOOLS USED

- News Releases
- Public Forum
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Community Collaboration
- Professional Designer
- Carpenter Foundation Funding
- Naumes Family Foundation Funding
- Finninsula Foundation Funding
- Oregon Cultural Trust Funding
- Jackson County Cultural Coalition Funding
- Oregon Humanities Funding
- Oregon Heritage Commission Funding

Spring 2013

To house the *History: Made by You* traveling exhibitions, SOHS designed and built a modular case system that would protect the artifacts, provide flexibility, and convey the concept of a museum. Working with industrial designer Michael Golino, SOHS developed the Mod-Ex system. An exhibition can feature a single pie-shaped unit or multiple connected units, greatly expanding its size. These cases are interchangeable, and an exhibition can consist of any number of units, based on the needs of the community and the scope of the exhibition. As few as two volunteers can safely install and deinstall an exhibition. Enclosed on all sides when installed, the exhibition cases offer a safe and secure method to display labels, artifacts, and photographs.



Sample Exhibitions:

Icons of Agriculture: Central Point's Community Roots, in partnership with the Rogue Creamery and Grange Co-op, emphasized the connection between Central Point's agricultural past and its historic buildings.

Wire by Wire: How the Telephone, Fencing, and Electricity Came to Lake Creek, in partnership with the Lake Creek Historical Society, investigated how the development of technology encouraged and strengthened community relationships.

Rhythm of the Rails: The Golden Age of Railroading in Jackson County, in partnership with the Southern Oregon Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, covers the exciting time of the railroad's advent locally to the completion of the Natron Cutoff in 1926.



Top: *Pedaling History* installation at Rogue Valley International Airport, Medford.
Bottom: *Icons of Agriculture* Ribbon Cutting at PremierWest Bank, Central Point.

Pedaling History: The Roll of Bicycles in Jackson County, in partnership with the Southern Oregon University Bike Program, explored how the bicycle has impacted the Rogue Valley.

Exhibit Locations include

- PremierWest Bank, Central Point
- Jackson County Fair
- Sterling Savings Bank, Central Point
- Rogue Valley International Airport
- Lake Creek Historical Society, Lake Creek
- Rogue Valley Mall, Medford
- Stevenson Union at Southern Oregon University, Ashland
- KidTime Discovery Experience, Medford
- Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, Ashland
- Medford Railroad Show, Medford



Visitors at the *Pedaling History* exhibit, installed at Southern Oregon University's Stevenson Union in Ashland.

Future exhibits will examine the immigrant experience in Jackson County, in partnership with an English as a second language class at the Rogue Community College; and the role of volunteerism in shaping the local community, in partnership with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.