

History at a Glance

Volume 6, Issue 2 Summer 2011—The “New Harmonies” Issue

Smithsonian Exhibition about America’s Musical Roots to Appear in Auglaize County in September and October

The Auglaize County Historical Society and Auglaize County Public District Library will host the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit “New Harmonies: American Roots Music” from September 12 through October 11 at the main branch of the library (203 South Perry Street, Wapakoneta). Auglaize County is one of only 8 locations in the state to host the exhibit, and is the northernmost and westernmost tour site.

“New Harmonies” highlights the many musical styles that were born from our country’s immigrant history, including blues, country, gospel, rhythm & blues, and folk.

What do blues, country, gospel, rhythm & blues, folk and rock ‘n’ roll actually have in common? All are musical styles that emerged from America’s rich immigrant cultural traditions. “New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music” looks at this music and how it served as the foundation for many musical genres appreciated worldwide.

When the earliest immigrants arrived in North America from

Europe and Africa, they brought with them the musical traditions of their homelands: percussive beats from west Africa; Protestant hymns from Great Britain; and folk music from Old World Europe, among others. In time, the music of their past evolved into expressions of their new journeys and triumphs, creating new sounds and harmonies. From the sacred songs of Native Americans and enslaved Africans emerged gospel. From the folk music and guitar strums of Europe emerged country and bluegrass.

As each new musical form took shape, even newer ones emerged, resulting in a musical heritage that is as unique and defined as the nation’s history.

“New Harmonies” tells the American musical story through photographs, instruments, lyrics and artist profiles. Although “roots music” is a relatively new term, its influences run deep throughout American culture and can be heard in today’s commercial country, gospel, pop and hip-hop genres.

The exhibition explores the work of well-known folk, gospel,

country and blues artists who have inspired generations of musicians, and captures the spirit of musical styles that are at the heart of local heritage in the United States—Tejano, zydeco, polka, Cajun, conjunto and klezmer. “New Harmonies” focuses on how roots music gives Americans a soundtrack and a voice for their stories.

“New Harmonies: American Roots Music,” an exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street initiative, is brought to Auglaize County by the Ohio Humanities Council, Auglaize County Public District Library, and Auglaize County Historical Society.

The Ohio Humanities Council encourages all Ohioans to explore the human story, to use history, philosophy, and the other humanities as the means to arrive at new insights. The Ohio Humanities Council is an independent, nonprofit organization funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and private contributions.

The Auglaize County Public District Library System provides resources to serve the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the public. The library is open Monday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The library is closed on Wednesday and Sunday.

The Auglaize County Historical Society welcomes its newest trustees, Josie Slater and Jen Cromwell, both of St. Marys. We appreciate your interest in helping us preserve Auglaize County’s unique history and sharing it with the community.

Some of the Scheduled “New Harmonies” Events—for the most current schedule, watch your local newspaper or check out the library website: auglaize.oplin.org

September 12, 6 to 8 p.m.—Opening Reception, Auglaize County Public District Library

September 12-October 11—Book Displays about “Roots” Music, throughout the library system
September 12-October 11—Exhibit: Musical Instruments from History,” St. Marys Library

Wednesday, September 14, 1 p.m.— “O, Brother, Where Art Thou?” (PG-13)
movie presentation, Stallo Memorial Library, Minster

Thursday, September 15, 7 p.m.— “The Federal Music Project and American Music”
by Professor Kenneth Bindas of Kent State University
Olive Branch Church, Shinbone

To combat unemployment during the Great Depression, FDR created the WPA. This program aimed at giving people jobs for which they had skills, so that they would not lose those skills. While it might be easy to understand how this would work for skilled trades or other semi-skilled work, one of the more innovative projects involved the employment of musicians through the WPA. This presentation will look at the creation, structure and meanings of the Federal Music Project and tie it to the profound changes of the era.

Monday, September 19, 7 p.m.—“Preaching the Blues”
by Dr. Peter Rutkoff of Kenyon College
New Bremen Library

Where do the Blues come from, what do they mean, and how can we define this unusual form of African American music? This musically illustrated talk on the blues takes its mark from the music of Muddy Waters. Born McKinley Morganfield in Clarksdale, Mississippi, Muddy Waters virtually redefined the blues, and took the musical form with him from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago.

Wednesday, September 21, 12:30 p.m.—“Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory”
movie presentation (60 minutes), Cridersville Library

First appearing on PBS’ American Experience, “Jubilee Singers...” tells the story of a group of former slaves who battled prejudice and oppression to sing their way into a nation’s heart.

Thursday, September 22, 1:30 p.m.—“Peter, Paul, and Mary”
movie presentation (80 minutes), White Memorial Library @ Waynesfield

This highly regarded film chronicles the enduring work of folksingers Peter Yarrow, Noel Paul Stookey, and Mary Travers. The film includes nearly three dozen tunes, ranging from “Lemon Tree” in 1962 to several new performances from 2003.

Friday, September 23, 7 p.m.— Concert of Bluegrass Music
by New Outlook Bluegrass

Wapakoneta Middle School. *A Free Will Offering Will be Taken.*

New Outlook Bluegrass brings to the stage great vocals and harmony, performing hard-driving traditional blue grass with a unique twist. New Outlook also plays the country music that you don’t hear on the radio station any more! The event will include remarks about the history of bluegrass by band member Casey Cook, co-director of the Denison University Bluegrass Program.

Sunday, September 25, 2 p.m.—“Spiritual Gifts: The Music of the African-American Church”
by Dr. Regennia Williams of Cleveland State University

New Knoxville United Methodist Church

This lecture will look at the 20th-century history of African Americans through sacred music, and will include scholarly texts, oral histories, audio recordings, and other sources. And we’ll sing, too!

*And those are just some of the highlights early in the exhibit schedule!
Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.*

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State History Representative to Speak at Membership Meeting on August 18

The Auglaize County Historical Society will host its third quarter membership meeting on Thursday, August 18, at 7:00 p.m., in the New Knoxville Village Hall, Main Street, New Knoxville.

After the business portion of the meeting, Ohio Historical Society Civil War 150 representative Amy Rohmiller will speak. Rohmiller's topic will be Ohio's leading role in commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War. She will discuss the various events that communities around the state are organizing to mark this milestone in the country's history.

Rohmiller, a lifelong resident of Kettering, Ohio, has always had an interest in history. She is cur-

rently serving as the Civil War 150 Leadership Corps Member for eleven counties in West Central Ohio, and is based in the local history room at the Piqua Public Library.

Rohmiller received her B.A. in history from Case Western Reserve University in 2008, where she researched the Cleveland Air Races in the 1930s and life on Millionaires' Row at the turn of the twentieth century. She will receive her Master's in Public History from Middle Tennessee State University in August 2011 and has worked on projects ranging from life in early Murfreesboro to family vacations in the twenty years after World War II.

Prior to joining the Civil War Leadership Corps, Amy worked as a graduate assistant at the Albert Gore Sr. Research Center at MTSU, and interned at the Don F. Pratt Museum in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

