

Smithsonian's BETWEEN FENCES

AHC HOSTS WORKSHOPS For Between Fences Sites

The Smithsonian's Between Fences traveling exhibition explores the history of fences in America, conveying information about the people who built them, how they view and use their property, and the nature of their relations with their neighbors.

Six rural sites will host the exhibition for six weeks each, and will also develop supplementary programming to tell the local stories that reflect themes in the exhibition. Arizona's host sites will highlight physical and cultural fences related to western ranching, Native American reservations, and this country's border with Mexico, among other topics.

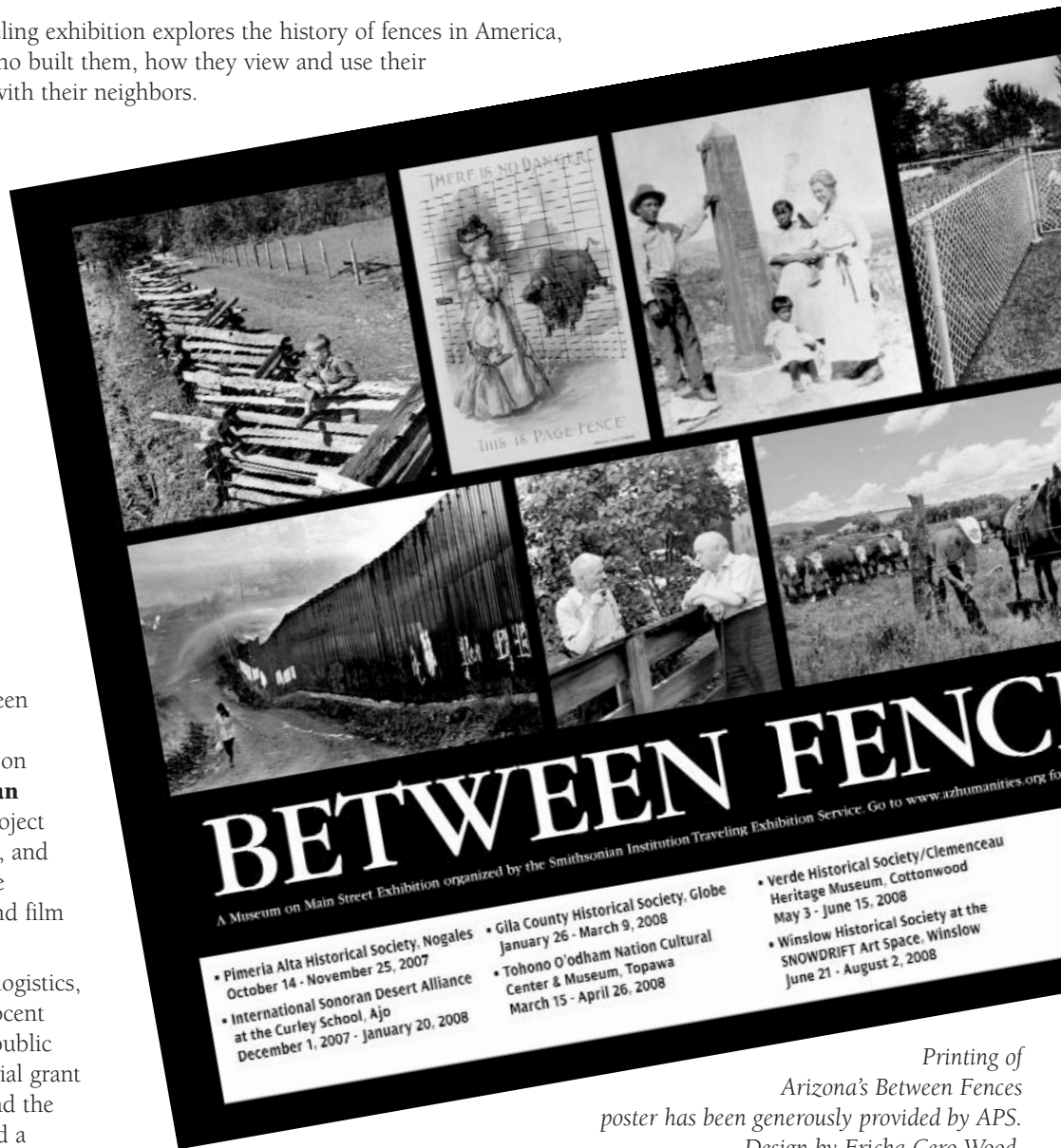
AHC is facilitating local exhibit development and program planning at the sites by providing funding, scholarly consultations, packaged programming (see page 11), and preparatory workshops, including the Exhibition Development Workshop held in June and the Docent Training Workshop held in July.

In addition, AHC coordinated the Between Fences Program Workshop for the six host sites at AHC's office in downtown Phoenix on March 29 and 30. Presenters included **Brian Crockett** with Museum on Main Street, project scholars **Ed Williams** and **Anna Johnson**, and project partners **Mitch Menchaca** with the Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA), and film scholar **Fred Linch**.

Topics included exhibition themes and logistics, local exhibit and program development, docent and teacher outreach, and marketing and public relations. Menchaca offered the sites a special grant from ACA for related arts programming, and the group bonded that evening over dinner and a discussion led by Linch of the Western classic *Shane*.

Between Fences is the third Smithsonian exhibition that AHC has brought to Arizona, and all three have helped AHC address its mission in multiple ways. Museum on Main Street traveling exhibitions help AHC fulfill its commitment to rural Arizona by fostering organizational capacity building and community partnerships at rural host sites. These exhibitions also encourage cultural heritage tourism, and Between Fences in particular, with its discussion of the U.S.-Mexico border, addresses AHC's focus on contemporary issues.

A calendar of all Between Fences events will be posted on AHC's Web site in the fall, and everyone in Arizona is invited to visit one of the host sites and experience their unique contributions to this ongoing national project.



Printing of
Arizona's Between Fences
poster has been generously provided by APS.
Design by Ericka Cero Wood.



COMING IN OCTOBER

Between Fences - BEHIND THE SCENES

The following reflection was contributed by Arizona's Between Fences museum scholar, **Anna Johnson**, who is a museum and historical consultant and former Curator of Education at the Tempe Historical Museum. Anna guides the host sites in their development of local exhibits, docent training, and teacher education, which she also did for the Arizona tour of the Smithsonian's Yesterday's Tomorrows.

Hosting an exhibition from the Smithsonian is an exciting experience for local organizations. The intent is to raise the visibility of small museums across the country and provide programs of high quality to rural areas where people rarely have these experiences in their own backyards. The enthusiasm of the local organizations is exciting, and the process they go through in hosting the exhibition is intense. As the project's museum scholar, I advise on the organizing, exhibiting, and presenting of the local story.

Organizing includes developing the local narrative. This connects the visitors to the theme of Between Fences and defines the ways in which local experiences are part of the national story. For example, did we fence cattle in or fence them out? Is the railroad a fence? What could be more relevant today than a discussion of fences and borders? Other issues include how best to accomplish the organization's purpose in hosting this exhibit, and developing appropriate programs to support the topic.

Exhibiting includes developing an interesting display that will encourage the visitors to better understand their own local account and to interact with the topic on a personal level. This includes finding and choosing which objects will most effectively inform that narrative, and placing the local exhibit somewhere close to the Smithsonian exhibition so the intellectual connection is clear.

Presenting the story will often include special openings, tours using docents or guides, school tours, and special activities developed to intrigue the visitor such as speakers, to name just a few approaches. How does an organization prepare for these functions? What organizational structure needs to be in place in order for them to be successful? Should the facility hours be extended, how many staff and volunteers are necessary, and where do we find them? How do we market this? How does the organization guarantee a consistently good experience for their visitors? Developing a high-quality tour that visitors of all ages will enjoy can be a challenge. We hope this experience will offer them growth and development and be a stepping stone to an exciting future!



NOGALES SITE BENEFITS From Workshop

The following article was submitted by **Sigrid Maitrejean**, Project Director in Nogales, which is the opening site for the Arizona tour of Between Fences.

Kathleen Escalada, Janis Bell and I found the March Program Workshop, sponsored by the Arizona Humanities Council, extremely helpful as we consolidate our plans for Between Fences in Nogales. Listening to the Smithsonian, the Humanities Council, and particularly the representatives from the other sites generated a lot of ideas – and we've been busy ever since getting everything ready.

We've touched base with most of the stakeholders in the county and in Nogales, Sonora, and have found a lot of enthusiasm, which we hope to translate into support as we move forward on Between Fences and our "wrap-around" exhibit, *In Spite of Fences*. We have firmed up the various sections of the wrap-around, and are now finding participants for our speaker series and our exhibit.

One thing we realized at the Program Workshop is that it is important for us to use this exhibit opportunity to enhance the Historical Society's archives; we now plan to include written material, in notebook format, for each of the areas of emphasis.

For example, we plan to include ranching family histories and stories in the Ranching Area.

Thanks for all the help – and besides, we enjoyed meeting all the participants and hearing their plans. The October 14 opening of the exhibit will include participants from both sides of the border, and, we hope, Governor Napolitano. We look forward to seeing everyone down here at installation time!



Between Fences participants, scholars, and coordinators at the March Program Workshop. Photo by Daniel Lutzick.