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Smithsonian Institution starts national program in Cedar Key



(from left) Ken Young, Mendy Allen and Sue Colson stand near a propane-powered cooker that is steaming clams and there are a few bags of clams behind them on the table to the right. Steamed clams were among a long list of delicious food given away at the premiere opening of an exhibit on display on the second floor of the Cedar Key Public Library. Young worked with Colson when the Florida Humanities Council brought the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service's project *The Way We Worked*, a few years ago. Right now, the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service's project "*Crossroads: Change In Rural America*," is on display at the Cedar Key Public Library. Mendy Allen succeeded in completing a \$5,000 grant application for the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce to bring this exhibit about. The city of Cedar Key promises to attract even more people than normal from now through the 49th Annual Cedar Key Lions Club Seafood Festival on Oct. 20 and 21, as a result of the exhibit and many planned events.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Sept. 8, 2018 at 11:18 p.m.

CEDAR KEY -- Three places in the United States of America are the very first to show "*Crossroads: Change In Rural America*," which is part of the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service.

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Frances Hodges (left) stands with her friend Cedar Key Vice Mayor Sue Colson. Hodges is a former city clerk for Cedar Key. As a child, Hodges lived for two years in the building that is now the Cedar Key Public Library. She lived in the structure that is Cedar Key City Hall for a long time, too, she said on Saturday afternoon (Sept. 8). There were many distinguished visitors at the premiere including Roland and Eileen Senecal of Cedar Key, Suwannee River Water Management District Executive Director Hugh Thomas, and Levy County Tourist Development Council Executive Director Tisha Whitehurst and her husband Wade Whitehurst.

Cedar Key Lion Anna Hodges (left) and Cedar Key Lions Club Secretary Marsha Harrington are the first beverage servers at the table Saturday afternoon. Cedar Key Lions Club President Mike Hodges and Cedar Key



Lion Greg Harrington were expected to help their wives as well. Greg Harrington is the official Cedar Key Lions Club Bartender. People in Cedar Key often hold more than one title. For instance, Marsha Harrington is also the Director of the Cedar Key Historical Society Museum, located at the crossroads of State Road 24 and Second Street.

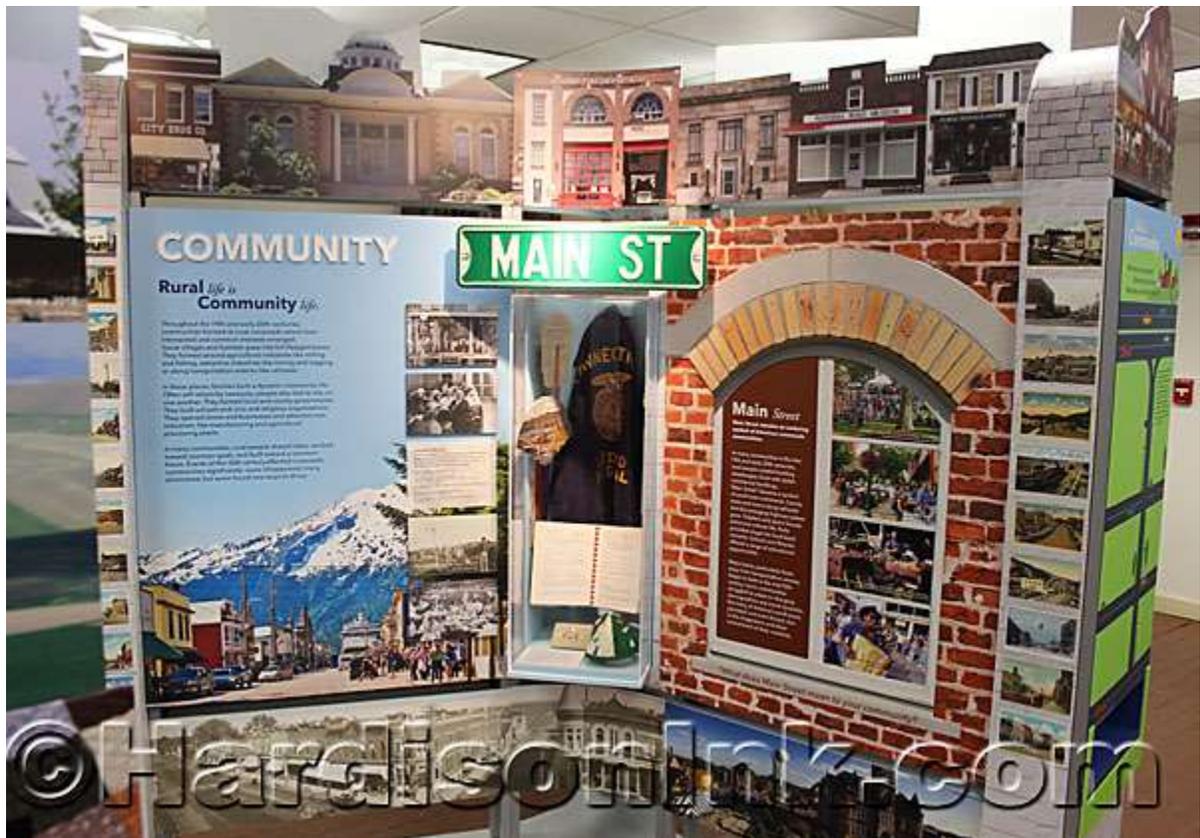
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Gator bite provided by Steamer's Clam Bar and Grill. Dennis Gill, Steamer's owner, was present for the premier and he is very active in the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce.



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The five pictures above are from some parts of the exhibit that show information about rural America today.

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The Cedar Key Public Library, the Chester Public Library, in Chester, Ill., and the Union County Carnegie Library, in Union, S.C., are the three places that had the exhibition on display as of Saturday (Sept. 8), according to information provided by the Smithsonian Institution.

The exhibition will be at the Cedar Key Public Library on Second Street until Oct. 20.

Cedar Key Vice Mayor Sue Colson, Mendy Allen and Ken Young worked with scores of people to make the monthlong "Crossroads" event come to fruition.

"Crossroads: Change In Rural America," is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress. Of course, in Florida, it is the Florida Humanities Council -- based in St. Petersburg -- that served as the conduit to bring the Smithsonian Institution's program to various cities in this state.

After Cedar Key, Colson said the next Florida locations for this exhibit will be Callahan, Live Oak, Bartow, Havana and DeFuniak Springs.

The display on the second floor of the Cedar Key Public Library includes five free-standing exhibition units with photographs, text panels, and objects; a video monitor; one free-standing touchscreen interactive computer; kiosks featuring video and audio content; and there is one outdoor banner.

This exhibition reflects change in rural towns across the United States.

The Smithsonian Institution notes that "In 1900, about 40 percent of Americans lived in rural areas. By 2010, less than 18 percent of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. In just over a century, massive economic and social changes moved millions of Americans into urban areas. Yet, only 10 percent of the U.S. landmass is considered urban."

"Crossroads: Change in Rural America" offers small towns a chance to look at their own paths to highlight the changes that affected their fortunes over the past century.

The program came to Cedar Key from the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce and from Mendy Allen writing a grant application, that awarded the city \$5,000 for this program.

Allen said she saw the Smithsonian Institution's interest in how Cedar Key has continued to thrive as a rural city.

It was by speaking with Vice Mayor Colson, Allen said, that she was able to write the successful grant application.

"Sue's the visionary behind how we're doing it here," Allen said. "She has the passion for Cedar Key. Sue's passion for Cedar Key is infectious to everyone around her."

Allen said the \$5,000 grant includes the people of Cedar Key creating a two-minute film, however the videographer has been so taken by interviews already, that this is going to be a seven-minute video when it is done.

The Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce hosted a phenomenal premiere and reception Saturday evening at the Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center and in the Cedar Key Public Library on Second Street.

The free food and beverages, including adult beverages, covered a broad spectrum although it was all Cedar Key.

Among the many free delectable items were shrimp wraps from The Island Room; gator bites from Steamer's Clam Bar and Grill; stuffed mushrooms from The Island

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Hotel and Restaurant; steamed clams from Davis/Cedar Key Seafarms; smoked mullet from Cooke's Oysters and Clams; a crab dish from Duncan's on the Gulf; and world-famous award-winning clam chowder from Tony's Seafood.

Vice Mayor Colson added her own meatballs, an extraordinary clam dip, and Greek salad on a stick for anyone to enjoy for free.

Several of the tourists who happened by during the reception and premiere found it almost unfathomable to be able to enjoy all of the delicious food and drink that they wanted, as well as to see the interesting exhibition.

Drummond Community Bank funded an open bar, where members of the Cedar Key Lions Club served drinks. There was also tea and water available.

Among the many Cedar Key Lions helping with this event in various ways were President Mike Hodges, First Vice President Susan Rosenthal, Second Vice President Donna Bushnell, Secretary Marsha Harrington, and Lions Anna Hodges, Greg Harrington and others.

Anna Hodges is also participating in several of the coming events as the new director of the Cedar Key Historical Society, which is at the very crossroads of Second Street and State Road 24 in Cedar Key.

This whole set of events on Cedar Key for the next month lead up to the pinnacle of fantastic festivals – the Cedar Key Lions Club's 49th Annual Seafood Festival on Oct. 20 and 21.

Even before this renowned seafood festival, though, the Smithsonian Institution, the Cedar Key Arts Center, the Bonish Studio, the City of Cedar Key, the Cedar Key Aquaculture Association, the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station, the Ocala Model Railroads Restoration Society and others will be participating in upcoming events to help visitors enjoy learning about various aspects of the island community.

To see the scheduled programs on Sept. 15, 16, 22, 18, 29, 30, Oct. 4, 6, 7, 13, 20 and 21, please see the [Community Calendar on the CALENDAR PAGE](#), where other events are listed as well.