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Sound of American Roots Music Comes to Elizabeth City, N.C. June 19 through Aug. 1

Museum of the Albemarle selected to host this traveling Smithsonian exhibit

(Elizabeth City, N.C., June 8, 2010) – The [Museum of the Albemarle](#) will dig deep into the origins of bluegrass, gospel, blues music and more when it hosts a local showing of *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*, June 19 through Aug. 1 in Elizabeth City, N.C.

New Harmonies is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaborative effort between the [Smithsonian Institution](#) and the [North Carolina Humanities Council](#), a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#). Telling the American musical story through photographs, recordings, instruments, lyrics and artist profiles, the exhibition will explore the distinct progression of American roots music—sounds that are native to the United States or were inspired from foreign cultures.

“*New Harmonies* gives Americans a soundtrack and a voice for their stories, and we are delighted to have been selected to host this important exhibition,” said Museum of the Albemarle Administrator Ed Merrell.

The *New Harmonies* exhibit showcases the work of well-known folk, gospel, country and blues artists such as Ma Rainey, B.B. King, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, Mahalia Jackson, Woody Guthrie and Joan Baez. It also captures the spirit of musical styles that are at the heart of America’s local heritage—Tejano, zydeco, polka, Cajun, conjunto and klezmer. It is considered

roots music because it predates and inspired the development of American rock and roll, rhythm and blues and jazz.

New Harmonies opens June 19 at 10 a.m. at the Museum of the Albemarle with a special ribbon cutting to mark the exhibition's six week run. A tribute to legendary jazz drummer Max Roach, from New Land, in Pasquotank County, will be given by Douglas Jackson, Professor of Music at Elizabeth City State University at 11 a.m., followed by a discussion on jazz.

In concert with the *New Harmonies* exhibition, the museum will showcase regional music by presenting performances, lectures and special museum events specific to North Carolina musical traditions.

Some of the highlights include:

- Performances by the Elizabeth City-based blues band **Uphill** (June 12), the **Long Family** gospel group from Greensboro, N.C. (June 27) and a **Jonkonnu** musical celebration of 19th century African American traditions (July 10)
- A “**Carolina Jazz Connections**” program by veteran jazz writer, radio announcer and historian **Larry Thomas**, who will speak about the relationship between African American gospel and blues influences and jazz music (July 10)
- A lecture by **Benjamin Filene, Ph.D.**, associate professor and director of public history at UNC-Greensboro, who will discuss the influence of the folk and blues singer **Lead Belly** (July 22)

On July 31, museum staff will re-create the look of the famous Nags Head Casino on the museum's portico. A museum fundraiser and party, “Saturday Night at the Nags Head Casino” will be a tribute to the coastal-influenced beach music bands that frequented the Outer Banks night spot. The evening will feature Casino memorabilia, live entertainment and dancing.

The Museum of the Albemarle is one of six North Carolina museums selected to host the traveling exhibition. For a schedule of all regional events associated with the *New Harmonies* exhibition, visit www.DiscoverElizabethCity.com.

The Museum of the Albemarle (www.museumofthealbemarle.com) is located at 501 South Water Street in Elizabeth City, N.C. The northeastern regional branch of the North Carolina Museum of History, the museum interprets the history of 13 counties in northeastern North Carolina, considered by many to be the birthplace of English America. Admission is free. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. For information, call (252) 335-1453.

Elizabeth City

Elizabeth City is located in Northeastern North Carolina on the Intracoastal Waterway, halfway between Virginia Beach and the Outer Banks. Known as the “Harbor of Hospitality®,” the city has six National Register Historic Districts and is home to the Museum of the Albemarle, The Center at Arts of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City State University Planetarium, Port Discover Hands-on Science Center for children and the nation’s largest U.S. Coast Guard base. Nature-based travelers are drawn to the area’s proximity to the Dismal Swamp and the abundance of outdoor recreational offerings. For additional information, call the Elizabeth City Area Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-866-ECity-4U (1-866-324-8948) or (252) 335-5330 or visit www.DiscoverElizabethCity.com



The [North Carolina Humanities Council](http://www.ncnhc.org) is a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Humanities Council supports through grants and public humanities programs vital conversations that nurture the cultures and heritage of North Carolina. In addition to grants and publications, the Council offers the Road Scholars speakers bureau; the Let’s Talk About It library discussion series; Museum on Main Street; and the Teachers Institute, a professional development program for the state’s public.