

THE WAY WE WORKED



DOCENT HANDBOOK

Museum on Main Street

A partnership of the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils nationwide in service to America.



Smithsonian



MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET (MoMS) is a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils nationwide that serves small-town museums and their patrons. This innovative project provides one-of-a-kind access to Smithsonian exhibitions and educational humanities programs. Most importantly, MoMS provides community museums and libraries an opportunity to showcase their strengths and reinforce their meaningful contributions to small-town life. Like all MoMS exhibitions, **THE WAY WE WORKED** was specifically designed to meet the needs of small organizations.

Visit the exhibition website at
www.MuseumonMainStreet.org/TheWayWeWorked.

For information about other Museum on Main Street exhibitions, visit **www.MuseumonMainStreet.org**.

THE WAY WE WORKED is a Museum on Main Street project developed by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, adapted from an original exhibition from the National Archives.

COVER: Submarine builder, CT, by Fenno Jacobs, 1943.
National Archives, General Records of the U.S. Navy



WELCOME!

This docent handbook will assist you in helping visitors appreciate and enjoy **THE WAY WE WORKED**. The handbook leads you through the exhibition — section-by-section — and offers ideas, themes, and questions designed to inspire meaningful discussion during your tours. Your job is to encourage visitors to think about the subject matter and invite them to share memories and personal connections to the exhibit.

THE WAY WE WORKED consists of an introduction and four content sections. This handbook follows the same format. An overview text providing a synopsis of major concepts for each section's themes is followed by "**Think About It**," "**Let's Talk**," and, in some cases, "**For Students and Families**," "**Let's Listen**" or "**Let's Watch**" questions.

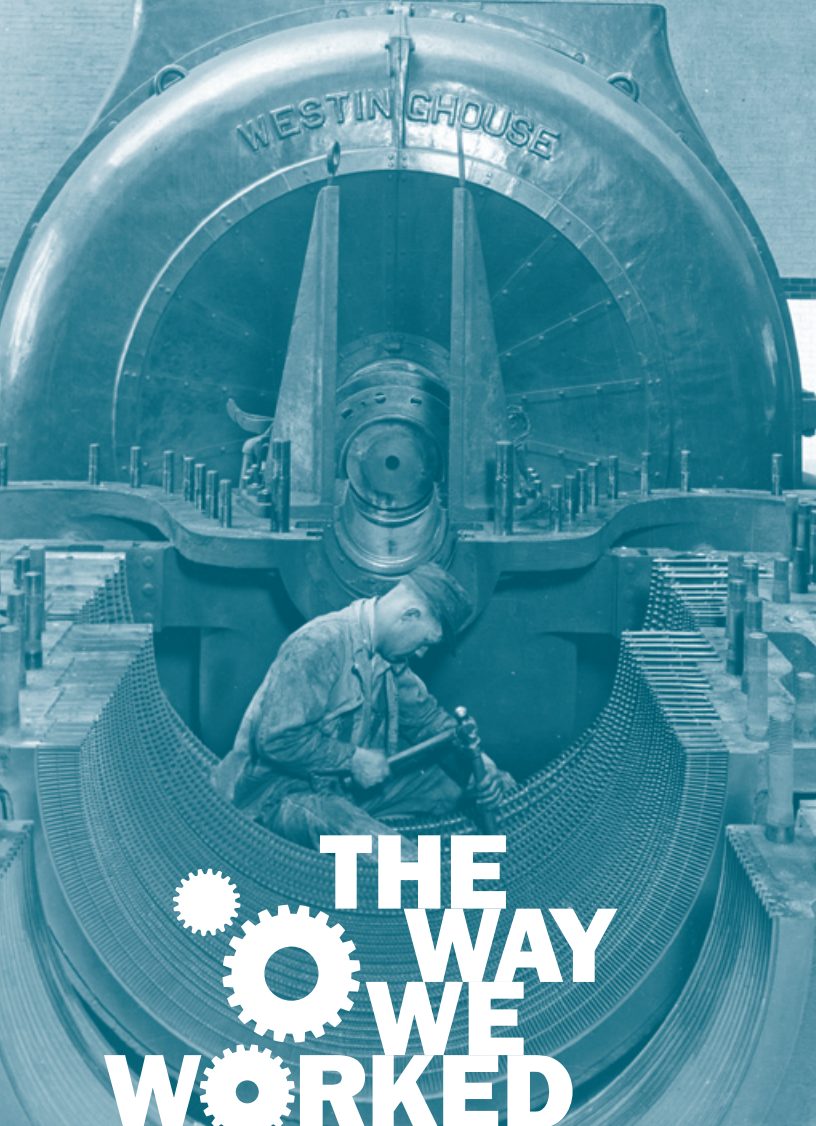
"**Think About It**" highlights important points in each section to encourage visitors to reflect. "**Let's Talk**" offers questions to ask visitors. Most are open-ended; the answers to others can be found in the exhibition text. "**For Students and Families**" questions are geared toward younger visitors. "**Let's Listen**" and "**Let's Watch**" remind you to encourage visitors to listen to audio or view a video found in the exhibition.

Review this handbook and the exhibition script, available online at www.MuseumonMainStreet.org, to become familiar with the exhibition. Remember, a docent is not expected to be an expert. You're here to initiate and lead a discussion.

Visitors in an organized group usually feel more comfortable speaking up; those who arrive individually and join a tour may require some coaxing. You don't have to ask all the questions in this handbook. Just one question can spark an animated discussion. You'll learn quickly which questions work best for different age groups and how long you need to spend in each section. Share what you learn on your tours with fellow docents. Your experience may help them with their tour.

Helpful hints on being an effective and engaging docent are at the end of this handbook. While this handbook was specifically designed for **THE WAY WE WORKED**, we hope that you'll extend your skills to initiate discussions about related displays, artifacts, and stories from your own community.

— THE MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET TEAM



SUMMARY

Workers are the backbone of American society. Known for their strong work ethic, Americans invest themselves physically, emotionally, and intellectually in their work.

American jobs are as diverse as the American workforce. The opportunity provided by work is central to the American dream and has attracted people to better lives in America. With strength, ingenuity, creativity, thoughtfulness, and heroics, American workers keep our economy and our society up and running. Our jobs and lives are interconnected, helping to keep America going strong.

◀ **Mechanic works on a turbine, New York City, by Lewis W. Hine, 1924. National Archives, Records of the Works Progress Administration**

THINK About It

Ask visitors what work they do. Encourage visitors to consider how even one person's work helps sustain a community. Then, consider how our work is connected or intertwined both locally and nationally.

Let's TALK

Explore the introduction to the exhibition. Ask visitors to talk about the significance of the large gear motif and the column of images of American workers? Some might notice that the gears symbolize how our jobs and lives are interconnected or that workers are symbolized by a pillar of strength.

Ask visitors to read the passage from Langston Hughes' 1935 poem "Let America Be America Again." Discuss how Hughes, an African American poet, explores whether the America of his time has fulfilled its dreams of equality and promise. How does work relate to that dream?

Ask visitors to list reasons why government photographers would take photos of workers and workplaces. What might have been happening in America when the photograph was taken?



Let's WATCH

Watch the video featuring historic footage of workers and listen to the lyrics of the song "We Do the Work." What does the wide variety of work done by Americans tell you about our country? Did you see something that surprised you? How has work changed?

▼ **Rolling logs into a river, MI, by W.J. Beal, 1901. National Archives, Records of the Forest Service**



WHERE WE WORK



▲ Weeding sugar beets for \$2.00 an hour, near Fort Collins, CO, by Bill Gillette, 1972. National Archives, Records of the Environmental Protection Agency

SUMMARY

Imagine the darkness of a coal mine, the fierce winds atop a skyscraper, the heat of a foundry against your skin, or the noises and bustle of a hospital. Americans work nearly everywhere. Every workplace brings different experiences and challenges. Where we work affects when we work, with whom we work, and the way we work.



THINK About It

Ask visitors to read the banner and think about all of the different places they have worked. Encourage them to consider how that workplace environment affected their work.

Let's TALK

Documentary and reality television shows often look at unique jobs or dangerous workplaces. Have you watched series like “Deadliest Catch,” “Ice Road Truckers,” or “Cake Boss”? Why do you think shows like these are popular? What would a show about your job be called?

WHERE WE WORK: IN THE ELEMENTS

SUMMARY

Millions of Americans spend part or all of their working lives outdoors. Comfort is relative, and weather calls the shots. They know what it feels like to haul in a fish net on swelling seas or dig hundreds of feet into the earth. Some of these jobs come and go with the seasons. But workers adapt their lives to shifting conditions.

Americans in the military must be prepared to work in any environment and deal with danger and adversity every day. Global threats may take them to any corner of the world at a moment's notice. Local crises might summon them to help their home communities.



- ▲ Workman on the framework of the Empire State Building, New York City, ca. 1930–31. National Archives, Records of the Works Progress Administration



▲ Aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jonathan Snyder, 2008. U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Navy

THINK About It

Look at all of the photographs of people working on the seas, in mines, and outdoors. What does it take—professionally, physically, and mentally—to work in those places?

Let's TALK

Ask visitors to look at the photograph of the skyscraper construction worker. What are some of the dangers and challenges these workers face? What are some of the challenges faced by workers in other environments like mines or working on the sea? Despite potential dangers, many Americans feel stifled working in an office or factory job. What are the advantages to working in the elements?

During the three weeks I spent there, I never saw the sunlight because we went down in the mine before the sun came out and we finished work after the sun had set.

—JOHN LUKASAVICIUS, 1939

Ask visitors to read the quote from John Lukasavicius. What led Lukasavicius to leave his work in a coal mine? Then, look together at the photo of the men in front of a mining car. Why do you think others decided to continue working in the mines?

Ask visitors to spin the photographs to see similar jobs being performed in both military and civilian environments. In what ways does serving in the military mirror civilian work? In what ways does military service differ?

Invite visitors to look at the farm image. What would happen on the farm if there were heavy rain or blazing heat? What other jobs might be affected by weather and seasonal changes?

WHERE WE WORK: IN OUR COMMUNITIES and OLD JOBS, NEW JOBS



▲ International Association of Fire Fighters photograph, ca. 1960.
National Archives, General Records of the Department of Labor

SUMMARY

Can you imagine community life without teachers, postal carriers, barbers, firefighters, police officers, or trash collectors? We see them every day, come to know them by name, or even regard them as family. These workers may have drastically different jobs and work environments, but they all provide vital services to our communities.

In the 20th century, dramatic changes have occurred in America's workplaces. Some jobs were invented while others ceased to exist. In 1900, a visit from the milkman at your door was routine. Today, a delivery is more likely to be a pizza.

THINK About It

Ask visitors to think about their communities as workplaces, and look at the images of the music teacher, pastor, doctors, sanitation worker, postal worker and rescue workers. What are some other jobs that serve communities? Describe what life would be like in your community without their contributions.

Let's TALK

Nearly 400 firefighters and police officers died responding to the 9/11 attacks. Who are the unsung heroes in your community? Ask visitors to share stories about other rescue workers who have saved lives in their communities. Are there any local stories of community workers who sacrificed their own lives on the job to assist the public?

Look at the photo of the sanitation worker collecting garbage. What elements of his job make it dangerous? What other municipal or county jobs could be considered dangerous?

Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit. – JOHN STEINBECK

Review with visitors the John Steinbeck quote. What do you think Steinbeck means by comparing the work of teachers to that of artists? What impact do teachers have on their communities?

Ask visitors to look at the 1918 image of the women delivering ice. Why was their job necessary early in the 20th century? What jobs in your community have disappeared as technology changed? What new ones have appeared?



▲ Women delivering ice, 1918. National Archives, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs

WHERE WE WORK: WITHIN FOUR WALLS

SUMMARY

More Americans work within the walls of an office, factory, or store today than in 1900. Even the home is a workplace, where the unpaid labor of mothers, fathers, and children is indispensable. Just like work outdoors, the demands placed on workers in these settings are as varied as the places themselves. And, sometimes the work can be just as dangerous.

THINK About It

Encourage visitors to think about how workplaces changed in the 20th century. Where do most people in your area work today? Are those workplaces indoors or outdoors?

Let's TALK

Compare the 1950s' images of the office, where the workers share the same desks, with the private cubicles of the 2000s. How do personal office spaces improve working environments and productivity? What are the positive and negative aspects?

Ask visitors to look at all of the photos of people doing work in their homes. Some are doing housework; others are making a living from the work they do in their homes. What are the different jobs that exist in your home? Are they paid or unpaid? What roles do members of your household play?

How did indoor work in factories change work cycles in the United States? Did the move from agricultural work to working by the clock ever affect your community and your family?



▲ The Battaglia family sewing trousers, New York City, by Lewis W. Hine, 1908. National Archives, Records of the Children's Bureau



▲ Tapping a blast furnace at the M. A. Hana Steel Co., NY, by Thomas W. Parker, ca. 1950. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency

For Students and Families

Ask students to look at the 1908 photo of the family sewing trousers and to be aware of other photographs that show children working. How does their work differ from the work that your parents ask you to do?

Review the graphic showing the percentage of the workforce involved in managerial, clerical, and sales work. Ask students to explain why they would prefer to work in an office, a factory, a home, or outdoors.



▲ Lever Brothers office building, New York City, Lever House photograph, ca. 1959. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency

HOW WE WORKED



SUMMARY

For most of human history, people did their jobs by hand or with the help of basic tools. Beginning in the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution introduced huge labor-saving technologies and increased our productivity. Farm tools and machines made the round-the-clock work of farming less labor intensive. We produced more goods, more cheaply, and in less time than ever before.

This revolution also moved many people away from the countryside and into urban factories and mills. Efficiency sometimes meant little regulation with long work hours, low pay, and scant attention to safety. Workers saw collective action as their best protection and fought for change. Technology continues to change the landscape of our nation and our workers along with it.



▲ Switchboard operators direct overseas calls, 1943. National Archives, Records of the Women's Bureau

Every great invention takes a livelihood away from 50,000 men & within ten years creates a livelihood for half a million. –MARK TWAIN, 1888

THINK About It

Dr. Bruce Bustard of the National Archives, curator of **THE WAY WE WORKED**, believes that most Americans hold a positive view of technology and mechanization. Read the quote from Mark Twain's letter to William Dean Howells and ask visitors to discuss the positive and negative attributes of new technologies. In what ways do you agree or disagree with Twain?

HOW WE WORKED: FROM AGRICULTURE TO INDUSTRY



▲ Harrowing the fields, IA, by Irving Rusinow, 1941. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics

SUMMARY

In 1900, the majority of Americans lived on farms, and about 38 percent of workers declared farming as their main occupation. By 2000, roughly 2 percent of Americans worked on farms. Mechanization and the growth of more urban industries partly explain this shift. New farm equipment, such as the thresher and motorized tractor, required fewer field workers. Former farmhands looked for work in cities, where technology led to a boom of factories, plants, and mills. Speedy new assembly lines and production tools changed the face of our factories and jobs.

THINK About It

Ask visitors to share stories about people they know who moved from farms to other towns and cities to take industrial jobs. What has this shift meant to jobs and the job markets in their area?

Let's TALK

Ask visitors to look at the image of the Iowa farmer using a tractor and a horse-drawn plow. How did mechanization affect farms?

Ask visitors to look at the “Help in the Home” page in the “We Run on Human Power” flipbook. What machine is the woman using to do her laundry? (See if they recognize the mangle, which was used to wring water from cloth). Tools are invented to help ease the burden of cleaning and cooking. Which household devices are most helpful? Which tools sit in a closet or garage unused?

Look at the large image of the worker posing with the “five-yard dipper” used in the construction of a dam. How would using such equipment make work faster and safer? How could the tool be dangerous for a worker? Can you think of major construction projects done in your community that require these sorts of machines?

For Students and Families

Ask students to scan the graphic showing how the number of farmers in the United States declined during the 20th century. Ask if they’ve ever visited a farm or if they know of a person or family member who is a farmer. How can we continue to provide food for the country when we have fewer farms?



Let’s WATCH

Watch the footage of technology at work. How did mechanized industrial processes increase productivity? In what ways might an assembly line or a new machine benefit an employer, but not a worker? How would you react in a similar situation?



▲ Workers assemble radios, NY, 1945. National Archives, Records of the Office of War Information

HOW WE WORKED: IT'S A SMALL WORKING WORLD

SUMMARY

Every new microchip, satellite, or handheld device offers an opportunity for workers to communicate faster and increase efficiency. Communication tools became more and more critical for American workers during the 20th century. The telephone, mainframe and personal computers, and wireless technologies made it possible to work, access information, and engage with colleagues regardless of location. Technology links workers across great distances and is now an inescapable part of everyone's work life.

I remember the days when we used to lug around... those 55-pound early portable computers. No wonder my lower back kills me today! –LAURA CAMPBELL, CA. 1980

THINK About It

Read the Laura Campbell quote. Ask visitors to look at all of the images and think about how quickly the tools we use have become smaller and more efficient. How have communications technologies evolved during your career? How has your work changed? Do these tools make your work easier or more complicated?

▼ **Computer complex for handling travel reservations, 1968. ©IBM Corporate Archives**





▲ **New York City Police Department, ca. 1908. Library of Congress, George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division**

Let's TALK

What are the pros and cons of wireless technologies? How have wireless phones, e-mails, and text messages affected the boundaries between our work lives and our personal lives?

Communications tools may be a worker's only lifeline to fellow workers. Ask visitors to name some jobs where the ability to communicate with a home base is crucial.

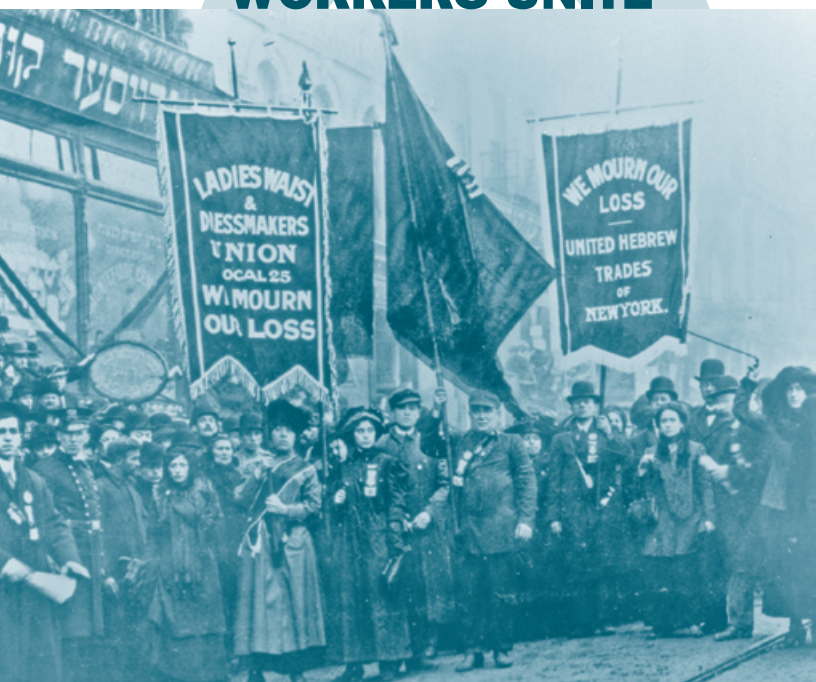
For Students and Families

Ask students to look at the communications objects and see if they can identify them. Ask which item delivers a message most quickly. Then, review the graphic describing the speed for sending messages via Pony Express, via telegraph, and e-mail and texting. How do students think we will communicate in the future?

▼ **A farmer and an agronomist review crop data, by Bruce Fritz, ca. 2005. U.S. Department of Agriculture**



HOW WE WORKED: WORKERS UNITE



▲ Triangle Shirtwaist Factory protestors, NY, 1911. National Archives, General Records of the Department of Labor

SUMMARY

As large groups of Americans began working in potentially dangerous environments, the possibility of physical injury, exploitation, discrimination, and harm increased. Some workers began to unionize, banding together to negotiate for better wages, hours, working conditions, and work rules.

Children were always (and still are) part of the workforce, assisting their families with work at home or on the farm. By 1890, 19 percent of American children aged 10–15 worked outside their homes. Minimum age standards for child workers were finally enforced at the national level in 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

THINK About It

Ask visitors to consider the importance of unionization in American work history. What are the benefits or drawbacks of unions? How has work in your community been affected by unions? How are unions perceived in your community today?

Let's TALK

Photographer Lewis Hine, who took many of the photos showing children at work, was an activist with a camera, depicting situations that highlighted societal issues. Are there other photographs in the exhibit that were taken to motivate people or promote an agenda?

Ask visitors to compare three images: the workers protesting after the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire; the activists for equal protections for disabled Americans; and the 1934 clash between a worker and a police officer. In all three photos, workers are protesting for better working conditions or better pay. Why are some work protests peaceful and others violent?

Compare the 1867 image of the Nevada miner and the 1967 radiation lab. Which worker is better protected? What advancements in the 20th century made it safer to work? How did the workers' movements of the early 20th century affect workplaces?



Let's LISTEN

Listen to the songs on the audio unit. Why do you think music played such an important role in motivating and maintaining solidarity among striking workers?

▼ **Loom workers at Bibb Mill No. 1, GA, by Lewis W. Hine, 1909.**
National Archives, Records of the Children's Bureau



WHO WORKS



▲ *South Texas Panorama* (post office, Alice, TX), by Warren Hunter, oil on canvas, 1939. Smithsonian American Art Museum, accession no.: 1968.115

SUMMARY

Our diverse, interconnected workforce is a key part of our nation's story. Every person's talent and perspective adds a new facet. No specific age, gender, class, or ethnicity typifies American workers. This diversity remains strong because American workers dream big and work hard. Americans search for new opportunities to build a better future. New immigrants seek to fulfill their dreams through work. Everyone can enrich the picture. Together, America works.



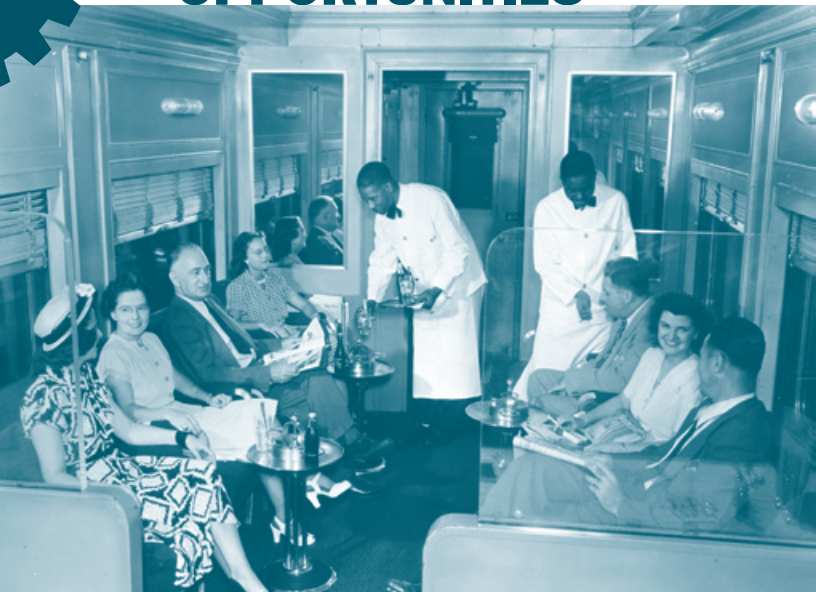
THINK About It

Ask visitors to read the excerpt from Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing" and think about the poem along with the mural *South Texas Panorama*. Why do we need the contributions of so many different workers, from different backgrounds, doing different things? How does this diversity help America thrive?

Let's TALK

During the 1930s, the Federal government commissioned artwork. Dozens of artists painted hundreds of murals for post offices and other public buildings across the country. Many artists used these murals to paint a positive, often celebratory portrait, of American workers. Why was this positive view important to artists during the Great Depression? Is there a mural honoring workers in your community?

WHO WORKS: DREAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES



▲ Porters in Erie Railroad lounge car, ca. 1949. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Erie Railroad Company photograph

SUMMARY

The “American Dream” is a powerful ideal. Our definition of this dream may differ, but we can all be inspired by its optimism. Work is often the vehicle through which people strive to achieve their dreams. Most came with an abundance of hope that working in America was their chance for a better life. Americans who were here already made a similar leap, moving to find work when times got rough. African Americans in the south sought jobs in the north and west to escape segregation. During the Great Depression, many Americans became migrant workers in farm fields. And people continue to uproot their lives today, seeking out more rewarding work.

THINK About It

Dreams of achieving financial success through work or land ownership were among the primary motivations for people coming to America during the 19th and 20th centuries. Look through the flipbook to explore stories from people who migrated to find opportunity. Ask visitors to share stories from their own families about ancestors who moved in search of work.

Let's TALK

What types of work helped establish your community? Do people continue to move to your area to find work? Do people leave your area today in search of new opportunities? Ask visitors to share their own stories about moving for work.

Read the quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In what ways do you think American society has fulfilled the promise of equal access to work for people of all races and cultural backgrounds? In what ways have we fallen short?

We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., 1963

For Students and Families

Look at the photo of the man perusing ads in the window of the Italian-American Employment Agency. Then, review the graphic listing the percentage of workers born in foreign countries in three communities. If you moved to a new place and were looking for work, how would you know where to go and what work to do? Who would you turn to for help? Explain that many immigrants often seek advice from others from their home countries to find work and housing when they arrive in America.



Let's LISTEN

Use your phone to call the cell phone tour “stop” listed on this side of the exhibition. Play the clip on how immigration has affected the diversity of the workforce in your state. What are the jobs in your area that attract workers from other countries today? How are those jobs different from the ones that beckoned immigrants to your area 50, and even 100, years ago?



▲ Chinese shrimp fishermen, CA, 1889. Gulf of Maine Cod Project, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries; National Archives

WHO WORKS: AT ANY AGE

SUMMARY

Do you remember your first job? Was it a paper route, at the register of a local grocery store, or on the family farm? Or are you close to retirement age with no intention of slowing down?

We can go through several work “stages” in our lives. Some of us experience a hard day’s work at very young ages through a family business; others get their first taste of work as teenagers with summer jobs, as apprentices, or interns. We may hold several jobs to climb the professional ladder or switch careers entirely. Americans are working later in life today than just a generation ago. The notion that work is central to life and builds a strong character feeds the American work ethic.



▲ Working overtime, Washington, D.C., by Joseph O'Donnell, 1949. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency



▲ Naval yard employee instructing an apprentice, ca. 1942. National Archives, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library Public Domain Photographs

THINK About It

Look at the photos of the secretary working late and the early morning food delivery. What do you think it means to “burn the midnight oil”? Do you think Americans are always likely to do that? What does it mean to you to have a strong work ethic?

Let’s TALK

Ask visitors to look beneath the rancher’s hat and read about the O’Toole family. Ask visitors to think about how the family’s work spans multiple generations. What are the advantages and disadvantages of going into the family business? Do you know of any families in your community that have passed a profession from generation to generation?

Take a look at the “Family Farms” focus label. Ask visitors to tell you more about family farms in their area. Ask if any visitors grew up on a farm? In what ways were you expected to work when you were younger?

Look at the statistic on the average number of jobs held by Americans before reaching the age of 36. How do you measure up to that statistic?



Let’s WATCH

Ask visitors to watch the video on Americans’ first jobs. Let each visitor describe her or his first job. What were the primary life lessons they learned from their first jobs?



WHO WORKS: WOMEN AGAINST THE ODDS



▲ Jean Schnelle works on her family farm, MO, by Michelle Bogre, ca. 1978. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency

SUMMARY

Generations of women struggled for the right to work by challenging outdated stereotypes. As with other groups, historical events helped create new job opportunities for American women. Thousands embraced the chance to work outside the home or in new fields. More pioneering women entered the workforce at higher levels and started their own businesses. They saw their work as gender-blind, inspiring each succeeding generation of girls to find the job they wanted. Their determination changed the country in the process.

THINK About It

Ask visitors to look at all of the images of women engaged in various types of work. How did the role of women in the American workforce change in the 20th century? Have perceptions of the capabilities of women changed since those days?

Let's TALK

Millions of women moved into the workforce to replace men serving in the military during World War I and World War II. How did the work of “Rosie the Riveters” help keep the nation going during tough times? Do you know someone who entered the work force that way?

Serving the country is something that my family has always been big on... and they impressed that upon me from a young age.

–U.S. ARMY BATTALION S-6 OFFICER KATIE BRINN, 2010

Ask visitors to compare the WAVES recruitment poster from World War II with the U.S. Army recruitment poster showing a woman pilot in 1990. How do these posters illustrate the changes in perceptions of American women, both in the military and civilian workforces?

Look beneath the U.S. Navy cap, and read the quote from Army Signal Corps officer Katie Brinn. Serving in the military is a tradition in the Brinn family, for both men and women. Is it still difficult for a woman to follow in her forefathers' work footsteps? Why or why not?

For many decades, women characterized the work world as having a "glass ceiling." What does that term mean? Have women achieved equality in advancement and pay with their male peers? Ask visitors to share stories they know of pioneering working women in their community.

Look at the photo of the Missouri mother working on her farm. What does it mean to you to balance your work life and your home life? In what ways is it difficult?

For Students and Families

Explain the graphic showing the change in married mothers working outside their homes from 1975 to 2000. Why do students think it was once considered unusual for a married woman to work outside her home? How has our view of working women changed, or has it? Encourage students to talk to their mothers about the reasons why they may (or may not) work.



▲ **Ellen Lew analyzes amino acids, CA, ca. 1976. National Archives, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture**

WHY WE WORK

SUMMARY

Does your job tell others something about you or where you live? Work conveys a sense of identity for workers and communities. Workers often develop strong, lasting, personal and professional relationships on the job that help them succeed or create safe workplaces. Those relationships extend into neighborhoods and towns, bonding families in a shared experience. For some, work becomes an important part of an individual's own self-image. Even work clothing is a sign of identity.

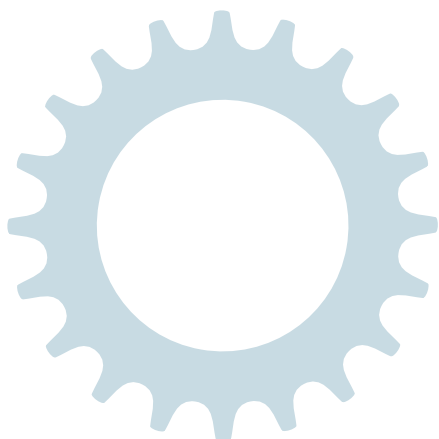
A community's identity is often reflected by its prominent industries. Local history and traditions are tied to the identity, pride, successes, and failures of that workplace. Communities can celebrate these connections or distance themselves from work history in the area.

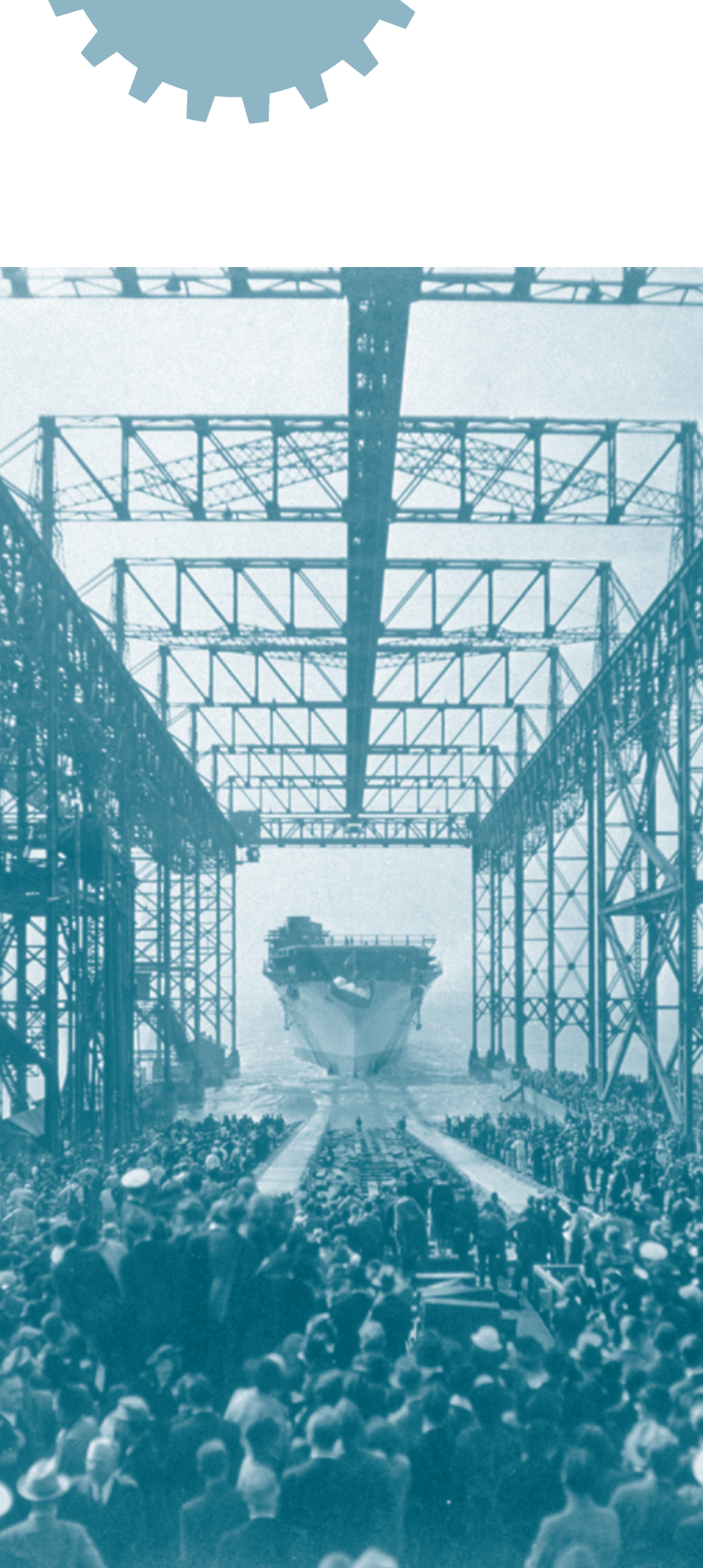
THINK About It

Ask visitors to think about all of the different reasons why a person works. Ask visitors to consider how work can be practical, challenging, fulfilling, and how it can unite people.

Let's TALK

Discuss the image of the ship launch in a Virginia shipyard. How do local industries and businesses celebrate the debut of a new product or completion of an important project? How do these occasions bring workers together and strengthen ties within the workplace and community?





▲ Ship launch in Newport News, VA, 1939. The Library of Virginia

WHY WE WORK: COMMUNITIES AT WORK

SUMMARY

Communities all over the United States are recognized by the industries located there. Americans know what work happens in California's "Silicon Valley"; in Pittsburgh "Steel City," Pennsylvania; and in Milwaukee "Brew City," Wisconsin. Local industries are written into the fabric of everyday life through festivals, sports teams, charities, and even town nicknames.

Workplaces are also like mini-neighborhoods. Workers bond over shared duties, workplace concerns, or even over conversations about personal interests during lunch. These relationships do not end at the factory door as workers and their families interact outside the workplace, taking part in office-organized softball and bowling leagues or attending union or professional organization meetings together.



▲ Gilliam Coal and Coke Company store, WV, by Russell Lee, 1946.
National Archives, Records of the Solid Fuels Administration for War



▲ **Company A, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mechanized), 25th Infantry Division, Vietnam, 1968. National Archives, Records of the Department of the Army**

THINK About It

Ask visitors to consider the multiple levels of community affected by work. There are larger communities — towns, cities, regions — that derive meaning from work. And, there's the more personal community, a community of co-workers and friends that develops among individuals. How does your work contribute to your personal identity?

Let's TALK

Ask visitors to look at the objects related to industries and businesses from across the country. Ask them to think about businesses in their area that are closely tied to the identity of the communities around them. Is your region known for a particular type of work or product? What local industries transformed work in your community? Ask visitors to list local landmarks that are related to work.

Based on the work that takes place in your community today, what nickname would you give to your area or to a local sports team?

Work is a social environment too. In what ways has a spirit of camaraderie developed in your workplace? How do you associate with your co-workers outside of the workplace?

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many companies developed towns where most employees and their families lived. In “company towns,” workers shopped at company-owned stores and rented their homes from their employers. How would you feel today if your life was so closely tied to your employer? Beyond our pay, in what ways do we remain dependent upon our employers?

WHY WE WORK: WHAT WE WEAR



▲ Women clean blast furnaces, IN, ca. 1941. National Archives, Records of the Women's Bureau

SUMMARY

Deciding what to wear on the job would seem to be a simple matter of choosing comfortable clothing that makes our work easier. However, work clothes have other functions. They protect workers from dangerous conditions, serve as badges of authority and status, make occupations immediately identifiable, and sometimes distinguish male and female roles.

THINK About It

Although the uniforms and clothing shown in the exhibition are arranged in three categories (*standardization, protection, and authority*), in reality, most clothing choices serve multiple purposes. Ask visitors to consider what we wear to work and brainstorm about all of the different things that our clothes represent. Ask visitors if the following uniforms can be classified in more than one category: firefighter and police officer (*protection, authority, and standardization*); chef (*authority and protection*); and military uniform (*authority and standardization*).



Let's TALK

What do you wear to work? How are you perceived through clothing? In what ways is there merit in the advice to “dress for success”?

How are your clothing choices prescribed by your employer? How do you think this clothing protects or benefits your employer and your co-workers?

Imagine wearing your normal work clothes to travel in space or respond to a fire. What benefits do functional clothes provide? How can your work clothes save your life?

For Students and Families

Discuss how jeans changed from being work wear to everyday casual clothing. Ask students to think about the clothes they own and the purposes those clothes serve. What items of clothing could be useful in a work environment? What are the benefits and drawbacks of uniforms that are worn at school?

- ▼ **New “white-collar” uniform: Hawthorne Works engineers, Western Electric Company, IL, 1945. National Archives, Records of the Federal Communications Commission, Western Electric Corporate Archives**



WHY WE WORK: THE VALUE OF WORK

SUMMARY

What is the ultimate value of work to Americans?

Americans value hard work and recognize the interconnected relationship between work and culture. Historically, the country has thrived because of its energetic and diverse workforce. For the nation, work is more than just getting ahead and attaining a higher rung on the social ladder. While it can be practical, challenging, and fulfilling, work also powers the nation's economic engine and plays an important role in our culture.



▲ Artist Numa Rousseve, ca. 1936. National Archives, Harmon Foundation Collection, Kenneth Space Photographs of the Activities of Southern Black Americans



▲ Depression-era soup kitchen owned by Al Capone, IL, 1931. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency

THINK About It

Remind visitors about the many reasons why people work. Ask visitors what the value of work is to them as individuals.

Let's TALK

Ask visitors what they think the exhibition curator, Dr. Bruce Bustard of the National Archives, means in the sentence “No matter what work we do—paid, unpaid, in an office, or in our homes—our efforts help drive the nation.”

Ask visitors to read the flipbook page “The Human Value” and think about the image of the unemployed workers in a soup kitchen line. Aside from the loss of income, what are some of the other effects—professional and psychological—of losing one’s job? How does the loss of a factory or business affect not just employees, but entire communities?

Read the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote with visitors. Why does Emerson believe that work is a critical element of achievement?

**Without ambition, one starts nothing.
Without work, one finishes nothing**

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

STORIES FROM MAIN STREET

THE WAY WE WORKED, offers a chance for you and your visitors to participate in an exciting initiative called *Stories from Main Street*, a Smithsonian repository for stories from rural America. MoMS host states and communities can contribute content related to exhibition themes. A project website at www.StoriesFromMainStreet.org provides a place where the Smithsonian, state humanities councils, host organizations, and the general public work together to create a permanent home for important stories, images, oral histories, and videos that document life in small and rural communities.

Why?

Organizations and communities like yours that host Museum on Main Street exhibitions are gatekeepers for American history and culture. An important focus for MoMS is to help local organizations bring out their stories — old and new — for a wider audience.

This website is for you. Share your local stories with the Smithsonian and the world.

What Kinds of Stories Does the Initiative Collect?

If it happened in small-town America, we're interested in your story. For **THE WAY WE WORKED**, stories could reflect the following themes:

- Your first job
- Migrant workers
- Jobs that have disappeared
- Stories from the family farm or business
- Military service
- Dangerous or difficult jobs
- What work means to you

How Can My Community Help?

Encourage your visitors to share their stories with your organization by participating in oral history programs. Your organization can work with the Smithsonian to post collected interviews and photographs.

Ask your visitors to tell their stories to the Smithsonian. Visitors can leave stories, photographs, and even videos at www.StoriesFromMainStreet.org. And, visitors who call in to listen to **THE WAY WE WORKED** cell phone tour can leave a message with their stories and reactions. All of this information will be reviewed for inclusion on the website.

Share your stories! Remind your visitors to visit www.StoriesFromMainStreet.org!

DOCENT HINTS:

Tips for Being an Informed and Effective Docent

- ▶ Introduce yourself and make sure each visitor in your tour group feels welcome.
- ▶ Tell visitors that **THE WAY WE WORKED** was created by an innovative partnership that brings Smithsonian exhibitions to rural towns. Each exhibition is specifically designed to be small and flexible.
- ▶ Orient your visitors to the exhibition, and give them a starting point from which you'll begin the tour. Give your visitors an idea of what to expect—how long the tour will last (30 minutes is a good average), whether there are seating areas along the way, where facilities are located, etc.
- ▶ Assess your audience and structure your tour accordingly. Younger visitors often relate to technology, popular culture, and references to today, while older visitors relate to historical content and personal memories. Be prepared to provide information to any visitors that may not be able to access the exhibition due to a disability.
- ▶ Be familiar with the exhibition and the information provided. Feel free to carry your handbook on tours, but avoid reading directly from it. Aim for comfortable and conversational exchanges with your visitors.
- ▶ Encourage visitors to ask questions. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know," but try to find out the answer before the visitors leave.
- ▶ Avoid focusing on questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Ask open-ended questions like: "What do you think...?" or "How do you feel about...?"
- ▶ Give visitors time to think about and answer questions. Usually someone will speak up in about 10 to 15 seconds.
- ▶ Be sure to practice your tour with museum staff, other docents and volunteers, and your family and friends.
- ▶ Remember, if you're relaxed and having a good time, your visitors will enjoy themselves too. Have fun!

As representatives of the museum, docents are often asked all sorts of questions. BE PREPARED!

- ▶ Know the museum's name, address, phone number, hours of operation, and the location of the gift shop, restrooms, water fountains, and seating areas for all visitors, including those with disabilities.
- ▶ Be familiar with dates and times of programs and special events associated with **THE WAY WE WORKED**, and with other exhibitions in the museum.

To learn more about the exhibition, visit our website
at www.MuseumonMainStreet.org/TheWayWeWorked



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