The Mount Airy Museum of Regional History will host the traveling exhibit “Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America” beginning this February. The traveling exhibit is a Museum on Main Street (MoMS) exhibition presented by the North Carolina Humanities Council, the Smithsonian Institution, and rural communities statewide. It marks the beginning of a year-long tour throughout North Carolina. The exhibit will be at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History from Feb. 28 to April 11.

“This project’s goal is to provide high quality exhibits to rural communities across our state,” said Museum Executive Director Matthew Edwards. “We were the inaugural site in 2010 with the New Harmonies: Celebrating American Music exhibit which inspired our own traveling luthier’s exhibit.” According to Edwards, this marks the first year the exhibit will have traveled. Edwards explained the Hometown Teams exhibit’s sports emphasis will allow the museum to tie in other sports, such as racing and the early racing heritage of Surry County. He noted that at one time, Mount Airy was a well-known horse racing venue. He said talks are under way to create a local exhibits of sports heritage and said the museum is also looking at a way to host local hall of fame inductee events.

“We are a history museum but we want to be reaching out to be relevant to everyone’s lives,” Edwards said. “The exhibit is another unique way to reach out to different groups.” He said parts of the popular White Liquor and Dirt Tracks program will be returning with its racer’s round table featuring those familiar with the early days of the sport. “With Hometown Teams, our state will uniquely engage the many themes of sports as they relate to our society and culture,” said Humanities Council’s Donovan McKnight, program officer. “North Carolina has a central place in the unfolding history of sports, dating back to ancient Cherokee Indians with anetso, the ancestor of modern day lacrosse . The colonial era in North Carolina introduced the traditional sports of horse racing, fishing, hunting, cockfighting, and footraces which tested skills considered valuable in North Carolina’s early agrarian society.”

The modern era of sports in North Carolina also brings with it professional sports teams like the Carolina Panthers, Carolina Hurricanes, and the Charlotte Hornets. These professional teams bring not only social entertainment, but economic impact and international attention to North Carolina. Support for MoMS has been provided by the U.S. Congress. Persons may learn more at www.museumonmainstreet.org and www.nchumanities.org.