

# Celebration Of Completion Of Exhibit Hall At GCHS

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A reception was held Thursday, July 1, at the home of Dr. George and Suzanne Elder on the historic grounds of Camp Unaka in Monteagle to celebrate the completion of the Exhibit Hall at Grundy County Historical Society Heritage Center in Tracy City. The Exhibit Hall will be open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Saturday by appointment. The Exhibit Hall is the second phase of the Heritage Center to be completed. In March the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company Library and Research Center was completed and opened to the public.

The site of the reception was a summer camp for girls opened in 1919 by Susan Keiser of Oceola, Arkansas and Bertha Taylor of Friendship, Tennessee. The camp was founded on the principles of the Woodcraft League of America. Camp activities included instruction in dance, pottery, French, drama, archery, tennis, Indian lore, pioneering, gymnastics, music and rhythm, nature studies, painting, crafts, and tutoring in any academic subject.

The camp continued for nearly 20 years until the threat of a polio epidemic caused the owners to close the camp. Thereafter, the land on which the camp was located was divided between the owners. The Taylor family still owns and lives on their part of the land. The Elders have acquired the Keiser part of the land.

The camp was named "Unaka" from the Cherokee word meaning "falling water," so named for the view of waterfalls visible from the camp office.

The Exhibit Hall of the Heritage Center features eight galleys around the perimeter of a large central area. Each galley depicts a significant part of the history of the region, five having national or international impact. The galleys will include:

- 1) Natural History and Geology of the South Cumberland Region,
- 2) the Chickamauga (Chikamaka) Story (planned in cooperation with the Chikamaka Cultural Preservation Organization),
- 3) the Summerfield Galley that will portray the challenging life of Dr. Lilian Johnson and her effort to establish an agricultural cooperative known as KinCo, May Jutus (acclaimed author of children's books) and Vera McCampbell, both noted teachers and the development of the unusual Highlander Folk School as a

center for the training of labor organizations in the 1930's and 1940's and later in the 1950's for non-violent civil rights training,

4) the Chautauqua Movement of the later part of the 19th century and the development of Monteagle Sunday School Assembly as the Chautauqua of the South (planned in cooperation with Monteagle Sunday School Assembly),

5) the Beersheba Springs Story as the cradle of Grundy County and the region,

6) Origin of the New South (coal, coke, iron, steel and the Mountain Goat Railroad),

7) Swiss Colony at Gruetli (planned in cooperation with Swiss Historical Society of Grundy County), and

8) Timber, Lumber, and Conservation.

The Exhibit Hall also features a mural across one wall that depicts ten historic buildings in Grundy County and nine enlarged photographs of people, objects and places. A second mural across the opposite wall is planned to portray the hotel in Beersheba Springs. A model of Shook School is in progress along with other historical artifacts.

The Heritage Center is in the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of restoration. During this period of severe economic recession the project has provided work for over 25 local artisans and workers. The general contractor is Sweeton Restoration, LLC. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by the end of the year. In the meantime the Exhibit Hall and **Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company Library and Research Center** are now open to the public