



## Grundy Historical Society Receives Major Gift

Staff Writer

The Restoration Foundation has announced a major donation to Grundy County Historical Society for the restoration of the historic First National Bank building and related structures in Tracy City and its development as a heritage center. The foundation is a family foundation of Lulu and John Elam of Nashville and Monteagle. Lulu Elam is the great granddaughter of Louise (Lulu) Estelle Robbins and Edward Lee (E.L.) Hampton.

The donation of the Restoration Foundation entitles it to recognition in the Felix Grundy Society for donors who have contributed at the highest level to the campaign to restore the buildings and develop the heritage center. In further recognition of the gift the Assembly Hall in the Heritage Center will be named in memory of Lulu Elam's great grandparents, Lulu Estelle Robbins and E.L. Hampton. The Lulu Estelle Robbins and E.L. Hampton Assembly Hall will be used as an audiovisual center and meeting room.

E.L. Hampton began his career as a telegraph operator at Stevenson, Alabama. After he had served a number of years in Stevenson he became a railroad agent for the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railroad at Tracy City. His experience with the railroad led him into the coal mining industry.

When the John H. Inman Group, led by Alfred M. Shook, in intricate corporate maneuvers, caused the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company to be moved from Tracy City to Birmingham in 1904, E.L. Hampton picked up the pieces that were left and organized the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company of which he became president. He also became president of the Nunley Ridge Coal Company at Tracy City and the Whitwell Coal Corporation at Daus, Tennessee.

In addition to his coal mining interests, Hampton served as a director of the First National Bank of Tracy City, Bank of Cowan at Cowan, Tennessee, American National Bank, and the Fourth and First National Bank both of Nashville, Tennessee, the Alabama By-Products Corporation and the Cumberland Portland Cement Company. Hampton was further active in real estate subdivision ventures in Nashville. He is credited with the development of the Fairfax, Stokes, Hillsboro and Overton Hills subdivisions.

Hampton was a breeder of and authority on both Tennessee Walking Horses and Angus Cattle. At the age of seventy eight he won the twelve mile walking horse event at the annual show in Smyrna, Tennessee.

E.L. Hampton and Lulu Estelle Robbins married on December 22, 1892 at Tracy City. She was the daughter of Milo and Margaret (Almond) Robbins. Six children were born of the Hamptons including: Stanlee Hampton who married Charlotte Sibley; Melinda who married Eben A. Wortham; Loiette who married Foster Hume, Jr.; Frances who married Brownlee O. Currey; Margaret who married Grover Sykes; and Lulu who married Ralph Owen and who are the grandparents of Lulu Elam.

E.L. Hampton died on November 27, 1941 at his home on Lynwood Boulevard in Nashville. Lulu Estelle Hampton followed him in death on February 7, 1947. Both are interred at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Nashville.

E.L. Hampton made an outstanding contribution to the wealth and welfare of Grundy County, Tennessee and the South. He was a builder of industry, employer of thousands, and developer of one of the nation's most beautiful state capitals.

The Grundy County Historical Society Heritage Center is being developed to inspire all of the people and communities of the South Cumberland Plateau, its coves and valleys, to understand who they are and how they are connected in history with interrelated pathways. The plan for development of the Heritage Center is to enhance knowledge of the cultural, historical and intellectual background of the region for the benefit

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of the residents, their cultural and economic interests. The plan includes the development of a research library for family, cultural and historical research with sources and proper equipment to access sources for such research. The plan further includes, as its central structure, to develop within the Heritage Center portrayal of five historical subjects that have had significant impact on national or international history.

They include: the Chickamauga (Chikamaka) separation from the Cherokees and extension of the western theater of the Revolutionary War by the Chickamauga (Chikamaka) to the pioneer settlements in Middle Tennessee utilizing ancient trails across the plateau to reach their adversaries and the aftermath leading to and including the Trail of Tears;

the origin of the New South with the innovation of the production of coke from bituminous coal with sufficient heat intensity to smelt iron into steel and the extension of mining activities from Coal Bank to Tracy City to Coalmont to Palmer;

the social experiment of the Republic of Switzerland to relieve itself from chronic economic depression by establishing a colony in the United States for willing citizens to emigrate;

the extension of the Chautauqua Sunday School movement to the South at Monteagle known as The Chautauqua of the South, and

the labor and civil rights training activities at Highlander Folk School at Summerfield acclaimed to be one of the seven most important sites in the civil rights movement.

The plan for development of the Heritage Center also includes the depiction of the geological and natural history of the region, the Beersheba Springs story as the cradle of development of the region, and the social, cultural and economic history of the people and their institutions on the plateau and within its coves and valleys.

Oliver Jervis, the Chairman of the Development Committee for the Heritage Center states that the realization of the Heritage Center and mission is at hand. He says "this realization is being achieved through generous gifts such as that of The Restoration Foundation and Lulu and John Elam who have seen the vision of what the Heritage Center will mean to the region and people and have acted on that vision."

Persons interested in more information about the Grundy County Historical Society Heritage Center may visit [www.gchs.homestead.com](http://www.gchs.homestead.com) or [www.grundycountyhistory.org](http://www.grundycountyhistory.org) or call the Heritage Center at 931-592-6008 or 931-592-6009.

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