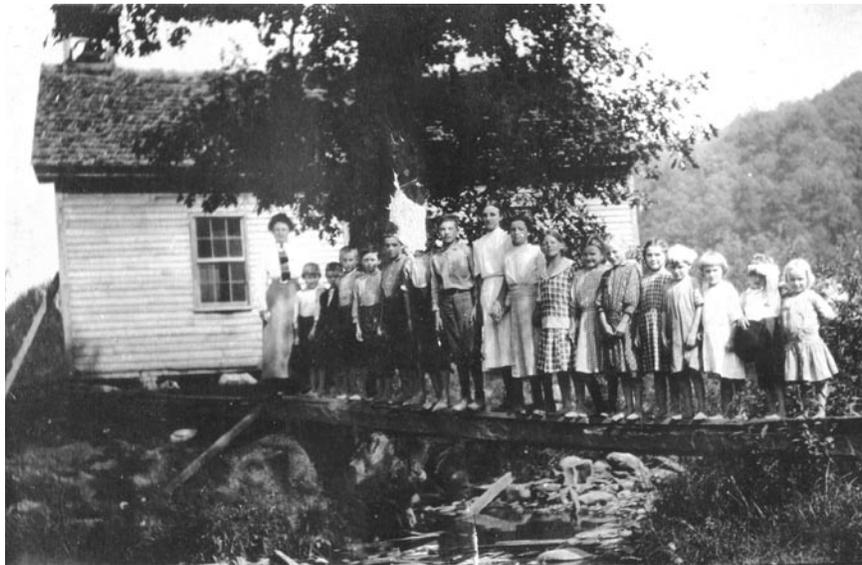


# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS Colloquy

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE LIBRARIES



*Pi Beta Phi School in 1913.*

## The PI BETA PHIS Come to Gatlinburg

On a late October evening in 1910, May Lansfield Keller, Grand President of the Pi Beta Phi female fraternity, stood waiting on the platform at the railway station in Sevierville, Tennessee, having arrived in a one-passenger coach pulled by a diminutive wood-burning engine. She was to be soon met by the Superintendent of Sevier County schools, a certain Mr. Drinnen, who had agreed to accompany May Keller the following day on a trip up the Little Pigeon River to a small mountain community called Gatlinburg.

The purpose of May Keller's excursion had been set forth the previous summer at the fraternity's annual convention on June 29<sup>th</sup> when Emma Harper Turner, former Grand President, appealed to the National Alumnae Association to sanction "the proposed establishment of a school for alleviating the distressing conditions in the Appalachian Mountains." The Alumnae Association approved of the proposal and, in the course of things, Gatlinburg was later identified as a possible location for a settlement school. May Keller's mission was to travel up the Little Pigeon, interview the people, and report to the committee appointed to inaugurate the work.

Mr. Drinnen delivered May Keller to a hotel in Sevierville and left her with the assurance that he would call early the next morning and drive her to Gatlinburg. The hotel was overcrowded, but, as Ms. Keller later recalled, "an obliging

*(continued on page 2)*



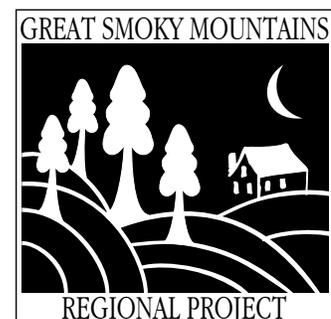
*Highlighting the collections of two important local photographers (story on page 3)*

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## The PHI BETA PHIS Come to Gatlinburg, continued



*Ogle house where the men of Gatlinburg gathered to meet "that woman," May Keller. It was later remodelled as a hospital. (1937 photograph)*

daughter of the proprietor gave her room up to me and also her bed, in neither of which it was deemed necessary to make changes in preparation for the new occupant." As the weather was still warm, Ms. Keller survived the night reclining on the outside of the bed using her own clothes for covering.

At five o'clock the next morning, Mr. Drinnen collected Ms. Keller for the trip to Gatlinburg, and in a light buggy the two started the seventeen mile drive following the course of the Little Pigeon River along some of the worst roads in Tennessee. As there were no bridges, the streams were forded, often with water running up the floor of the buggy.

About noon the buggy reached Gatlinburg, a tiny mountain hamlet of no more than a half-dozen houses, a blacksmith shop, a Baptist Church, and an old broken down schoolhouse. Not one of the houses was higher than one story and the largest, Ms. Keller recalls, consisted "of two rooms, a living room and bed room combined, and a small kitchen." The population of Gatlinburg was about five or six hundred people, the majority of which were children. The people inhabited mostly log cabins and shacks dispersed in among the deep recesses of the mountains and along the many creeks that tumble down from the mountainsides.

The entire population turned out to meet Mr. Drinnen and May Keller, and the two visitors were soon escorted by the crowd to the town's only schoolhouse, an old, primitive, ramshackle, one-room building situated near the confluence of Baskins Creek and Little Pigeon River. The schoolhouse had a very low ceiling supported by six poles and sparsely furnished with low wooden seats without desks. The only teacher was a man who had no more than a fifth grade education.

May Keller quickly surmised that the mountaineers of East Tennessee were suspicious of "furriners" and slow to speak out in public, although she garnered much information useful to her mission afterward on the porch of the Ogle house where dinner was provided and the men congregated to meet "that woman." As soon as the men found out that May Keller was neither a religious propagandist, nor a Catholic, nor a person out to sell them goods, they became intent and serious about the matter of gaining a proper school for their children.

The earnestness of these mountaineers must have impressed May Keller for two years later the fraternity

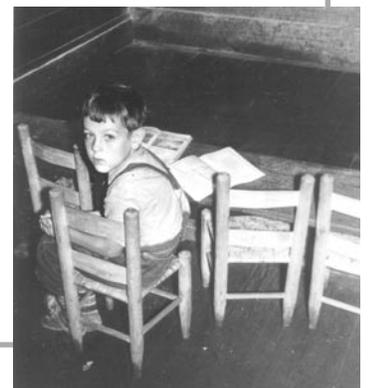
hired a teacher and leased for her a house in Gatlinburg for \$1.50 a month. On February 20, 1912 the first session of the Phi Beta Phi Settlement School was open in the old school house with thirteen mountain children in attendance and Miss Martha Hill of Nashville, Tennessee in charge.

Pi Beta Phi entered these mountains with the avowed intention of staying and establishing a permanent settlement school. However the people were slow in giving the promised cooperation in procuring land for a permanent school. The mountaineers had no experience with purely altruistic projects and many were still skeptical about the religious affiliations of the Pi Phis. As the matter of the land acquisition dragged on, Elizabeth Clark Helmick, chair of the Settlement School Committee, issued an ultimatum, explaining that it is customary for businessmen to support such movements as this and that the people should provide for the acquisition of the land as an assurance that they wanted a school.

Within the allotted time, Andy Huff drew up a subscription list and solicited money to purchase a parcel of land E.E. Ogle had agreed to sell for the school. This was the first of several purchases which eventually expanded the school to about 120 acres. Fittingly, the campus grew to include the old Ogle cottage where the men of Gatlinburg once gathered to meet "that woman," May Keller, and to set the course for the beginnings of a settlement school on the Little Pigeon.

## UT Libraries Awarded Grant to Digitize the Arrowmont Archives

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE LIBRARIES in partnership with Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts and the Pi Beta Phi Elementary School in Gatlinburg have been awarded a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to digitize the archives at Arrowmont. The archives include photographs, letters, diaries, printed pieces, institutional records, and advertising material documenting the history of Pi Beta Phi and later Arrowmont activities in Gatlinburg. The result of the two-year grant project will be a searchable Internet-based collection of digitized items accompanied by textual essays. Curriculum material for K-8 students will also be available via the website. For more information on the grant, go to: [www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont](http://www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont)



*Student at Pi Beta Phi School circa 1920s.*



Photos by Jim Thompson (left; above). The photo above is of Rainbow Falls.



Jim Thompson marking the Appalachian Trail in the Smokies, circa 1926. Photograph from the Roth Collection, UT Library.

## Smokies Photographs of Jim Thompson Coming to the UT Digital Library

The name Jim Thompson is synonymous with early photography of the Smokies. Soon the world will be able to view the extant collection of Thompson images of the Smokies via the UT Digital Library. The project to digitize the Thompson photographs is a collaborative effort of the UT Digital Library, the McClung Collection of the Knox County Public Library, and Ed Thompson, grandson of Jim Thompson and owner of Thompson Photo Products.

Jim Thompson and his brother Robin were the preeminent Knoxville

professional photographers of the early and mid-twentieth century. Passionate about the Smokies and very involved in the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, Jim Thompson carried heavy photographic equipment up steep mountain terrain to take some of the finest images ever developed of the Smokies. His photographs were used to “sell” the national park in the Smokies to the federal park commission. Countless publications from the 1920s and 1930s utilized Thompson photographs to illustrate the wonders of the new national park.

*Notice the similarity between the photos above, right, and below, left? That's because Jim Thompson and Dutch Roth often went on photographic excursions together and photographed each other in identical poses.*



Albert “Dutch” Roth marking the Appalachian Trail in the Smokies, circa 1926. Photograph from the Roth Collection, UT Library.

## Original Roth Photographs Donated to UT Library

Albert “Dutch” Roth was very particular that his negatives and images be carefully organized and preserved. His daughter, Margaret Ann, carried on this meticulous care of his photographs after his death, allowing the negatives to leave her house only once to be scanned by the UT Smokies project to form the Albert “Dutch” Roth Digital Photograph Collection. Upon Margaret Ann’s

death earlier this year, her nephew Charlie Roth donated the negatives to the UT Library where they will be organized and preserved in a manner that certainly would have pleased Dutch Roth. After the collection is organized, Smokies project staff will review the collection with an eye towards adding more digital images to the Roth Digital Photograph Collection.

## New on the Smokies Bookshelf

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### Non-Fiction

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Banks, William H. *Plants of the Cherokee: Medicinal, Edible, and Useful Plants of the Eastern Cherokee*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2004.

Bradley, Michael R. *It Happened in the Great Smokies*. Guilford, CT: Falcon Press, 2004.

Dodd, C. Kenneth and Grant, Jacqueline. *The Amphibians of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004.

Jones, Adam and Kemp, Steve. *Great Smoky Mountains: Simply Beautiful*. Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2004.

Maynard, Charles. *Churches of the Smokies*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2004.

Mays, Carl. *People of Passion: Stories of Faith and Determination that Will Touch your Heart and Warm your Soul*. Johnson City: Overmountain Press, 2004.

Montgomery, Michael B. and Hall, Joseph S. *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004.

Pierce, Daniel. *Logging in the Smokies*. Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2004.

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### Fiction

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Rosborough, Vicki. *The Crystalline Gift*. Belaire, TX: Vickim Pub, 2004.

Hall, James W. *Forests of the Night: A Novel*. NY: St. Martin's Minotaur, 2005.

Hunley, Nancy Melissa. *This Time Around*. Knoxville: L.A. Dydds Inc, 2004.



*GSM Colloquy*

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