

# GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS Colloquy

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*Among the courses offered at the inaugural 1945 Pi Beta Phi Settlement School's Summer Workshop of Crafts and Community Recreation was textile design. Here, students practice relief printing.*

## “A Finer Type of Scholastic Service” THE FOUNDING OF THE PI BETA PHI SETTLEMENT SCHOOL'S SUMMER WORKSHOP OF CRAFTS AND COMMUNITY RECREATION

From almost the moment that Pi Beta Phi first established its settlement school on the banks of the Little Pigeon River in February 1912, the fraternity sought to bring economic stability to the citizens of Gatlinburg, Tennessee by promoting, and in some cases reviving entirely, the production and sale of native Southern Appalachian handicrafts. In this endeavor, the fraternity was more than successful. Thanks to a network of Pi Beta Phi alumnae clubs, which marketed handicrafts on behalf of Gatlinburg craftspeople, as well as the skilled leadership of arts and crafts instructors such as Otto J. Mattil (woodworking) and Winogene Redding (weaving), among others, the fraternity built up one of the most lucrative cottage industries in American history. “Arrowcraft” profits saw many a Gatlinburg family through the economic hard times of the Great Depression, providing them with steady income at a time when Americans in more prosperous regions of the country were struggling to find gainful employment.

*(continued on page 2)*



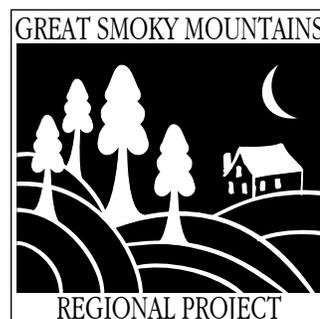
*Teachers Frances Lovingood (left) and Aaltje VanDenburg (right) demonstrate a folk dance at the 1950 Summer Crafts Workshop.*

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## Pi Beta Phi Settlement School Summer Workshop, continued



Given its long-standing commitment to handi-crafts production and promotion, then, it comes as no surprise that the fraternity viewed the Sevier County School Board's April 1943 decision to assume financial responsibility for basic primary and secondary education in Gatlinburg—a move that was more symbolic than substantive—as an opportunity to redirect its resources towards “a finer type of scholastic service.” This entailed providing settlement school students with a comprehensive program of “diversified arts and crafts,” at least at first; but in a relatively short time, it grew to mean much more. Taking a cue from the University of Tennessee's Dean of Home Economics, Jessie Harris, who had long-dreamed of establishing a university-affiliated crafts program in Gatlinburg, the Settlement School Committee decided to “sponsor an off-campus workshop each summer on the grounds.” The first session, dubbed tentatively the “Summer Workshop of Crafts and Community Recreation,” was set to convene on June 11, 1945.

Soon thereafter, all became hustle and bustle at the settlement school. Staff members ushered students out for the summer, and then set immediately to the



*FAR LEFT: Arrowcraft profits saw many a Gatlinburg family through the economic hard times of the Great Depression.*

*LEFT: Arlie Watson (right) and his son Neal (left), Pi Beta Phi Settlement School caretakers.*

*BOTTOM LEFT: A Summer Crafts Workshop student prepares to fire a piece of pottery.*

task of converting the now-vacant school buildings into dormitories. Here, thankfully, the University of Tennessee stepped in to offer assistance. At Harris's request, surplus war materials stored at the university—mostly army cots—were loaded onto trucks in Knoxville and shipped to the settlement school. On receiving the cots and other supplies, staff members used them to create functional, if not altogether comfortable, student quarters. Equipping the classrooms was much more simple, for the settlement school possessed enough looms, woodworking tools, and other arts and crafts equipment to meet students' and instructors' needs. All that was needed was to move everything to a central location on campus, a job that fell into the capable hands of settlement school caretaker and Gatlinburg native Arlie Watson.

That the living conditions were a bit rustic, and the course offerings a bit limited, appears not to have bothered the students. “From the beginning...to the end on July 18,” wrote student and Director of Industrial Arts of the New Mexico State Department of Education, Gail Barber, the Summer Crafts Workshop “was one of the most pleasant and profitable school sessions I have ever attended.” All told, fifty students from nineteen states attended the workshop that summer; and while they came from a variety of backgrounds (there were, among the student body, home demonstration agents, arts and crafts teachers, active Pi Phis, community recreation leaders, and some who were “not interested in credit but [were] attending only to make beautiful things for the joy of making and the pleasure of using”), all were interested in the “flowering of...creative ability.” And flower they did. Students poured their talents into woodworking, weaving, and textile design projects, and even found time to participate in community recreation courses. So engrossed were they in their work, in fact, that the settlement school staff faced undue difficulty adhering to a tight schedule.

Gatlinburg's location near the entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park served only to enhance students' experience. In fact, the workshop staff organized a Fourth of July hike in the Park as a special treat, led by



Marian Heard (front) served as director of the Summer Crafts Workshop, as well as its successor, the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, from 1946-1977.



none other than Gatlinburg's own "Roamin' Man of the Mountains," Wiley Oakley. According to Gail Barber, Oakley guided them "along a number of the most beautiful mountain trails before stopping the group for lunch under 'an old Appalachian Trail shelter.'" As she and her fellow students prepared their meals over a crackling fire, inhaling the sweet aroma produced by "scented...balsam boughs," they "could easily imagine the Indians and early settlers as they traveled along the trail."

If students were pleased with the workshop, the Settlement School Committee was ecstatic. "Pi Beta Phi's 'jewel,'" wrote chairman Mildred Sale in September 1945, "now glistens with a new brilliance, for its influence and scope have been enlarged in almost untold measure, [with] each student serving as a newly-cut facet, reflecting in her home community the enthusiasm felt at Gatlinburg." Already, plans were in the making for a second and even a third workshop, both of which, Sale reasoned, would be even more successful than the first. "It will be well for all interested Pi Phis to get reservations," she warned her fraternity sisters, "as, in all probability, it will be necessary to limit enrollment.

Over the next twenty-five years, and thanks in large part to the wise leadership shown by University of Tennessee Professor of Craft Design Marian Heard (who assumed directorship in 1947), the Summer Crafts Workshop developed from its humble origins into an internationally-renowned arts and crafts program. And although no one knew it at the time, the fraternity had sown the seeds of Arrowmont, the year-round arts and crafts institute that would eventually occupy the grounds of the original Pi Beta Phi Settlement School.

*Information for this article was borrowed from the September 1938, December 1941, May, September, and December 1945, December and September 1946, March 1948, May 1949 and Winter 1977 editions of The Arrow of Pi Beta Phi, a quarterly publication of the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women. This publication is part of the archive collection at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. Articles referenced here as well as many others are being digitized for inclusion in an online collection. Sample excerpts are available for viewing now at the project website: [www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/](http://www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/).*

## New on the Smokies Bookshelf

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### NON-FICTION

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Baldwin, Juanitta. *Smoky Mountain Ghostlore*. Suntop Press, 2005.

Campbell, Carlos C. *Memories of Old Smoky: Early Experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains*. Edited by Rebecca Campbell Arrants. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005.

Davis, Frank C. *My C.C.C. Days: Civilian Conservation Corps*. Boone, NC: Parkway Pub., 2006.

Davis, Hattie Caldwell. *Maggie Valley in the Great Smoky Mountains, 1787-1934: Historic Homes and the Early Pioneers*. Maggie Valley, NC: Hattie Caldwell Davis, 2005.

Edwards, Ernest Preston. *Birds of Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park: A Field Guide*. Blacksburg, VA: McDonald and Woodward Pub., 2006.

Ellison, George. *Mountain Passages: Natural and Cultural History of Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains*. Charleston: History Press, 2005.

Hargan, Jim. *The Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains*. Edina, MN.: ABDO Pub. Co., 2005

Lea, Bill. *Great Smoky Mountains: Wildlife Portfolio*. Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2005.

McHugh, Dick and Mitch Moore. *Insiders' Guide to the Great Smoky Mountains*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005.

Miller, J. W. *Fifty Six Hours*. Karen H. Miller Publisher, 2005.

Read, Michael, Loretta Chilcoat, and David Lukas. *Great Smoky Mountains & Shenandoah National Parks* (Lonely Planet Travel Guides). Lonely Planet Publications, 2005.

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### FICTION

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Clouse, Loretta. *Mallie*. Knoxville: Tennessee Valley Pub., 2005.

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

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### JUVENILE

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Hamilton, John. *Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Abdo & Daughters Pub. 2005.

Kemp, Steve and Robert Rath. *Who Pooped in the Park?* Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2005.

Pancella, Peggy. *Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Chicago, Heinemann Library, 2006.

## Arrowmont Website Updates

[www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/](http://www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/)

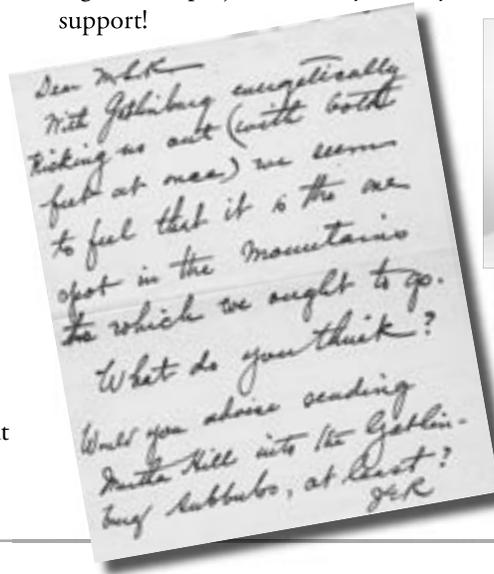
We invite you to come and visit the From Pi Beta Phi to Arrowmont Website to see exciting new exhibits, materials, and designs! The digitization project has come into its final year and every week new elements are being added to the website for the public to enjoy. One of our most recent and exciting additions is the 360 Degree Interactive Gallery which features animated three-dimensional art objects from Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. These include a range of sculpture and art objects, from baskets created by Aunt Lydia Reagan to modern works by artists such as Stoney Lamar and Robyn Horn. Also posted is a comprehensive manual which details every aspect of the digitization and software processes used.

Our Letters & Correspondence Page is now posted and available for viewing. We have four distinctive collections of correspondence, from collected letters from settlement school teachers Evelyn Bishop and Ruth Sturley to correspondence selected from the Pi Phi Headquarters. All letters are available to read in their entirety.

We have also added two new Galleries of Photographs that feature the early years of the Settlement School. These include a wide range of photographs depicting the early years of the

settlement school and surrounding areas to more modern pictures of craftsman and the arts and crafts school. In addition, be sure to check out the Scrapbook Collections of the website to view five distinctive and beautiful scrapbooks filled with images, writings, and more.

The entire website has been redesigned and updated so browse at your leisure to explore the many new features now available. Be sure to bookmark the site at [www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/](http://www.lib.utk.edu/arrowmont/) to keep up with the latest additions and announcements from the digitization project. Thank you for your continued interest and support!



ABOVE: Image from the Art of Arrowmont Gallery. Robyn Horn, "Pierced Geode," 1990.

LEFT: Handwritten letter from the Pi Phi Collection.



### GSM Colloquy

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### Join Us for Lunch and Learn more about the Pi Beta Phi/Arrowmont Grant

On June 14 at noon, the grant staff will give a Brown Bag presentation on stories and images from early Gatlinburg at the East Tennessee Historical Society, 601 South Gay Street, Knoxville. We would love to see you there!

### Smokies Website Has a Whole New Look

The Smokies website ([www.lib.utk.edu/smokies](http://www.lib.utk.edu/smokies)) has been revamped. You will find a slideshow of photographs from our digital collections, updated links, and back issues of *Colloquys*. Take a look and let us know what you think by emailing us at [smokies@aztec.lib.utk.edu](mailto:smokies@aztec.lib.utk.edu).