

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS Colloquy

April 2002
Volume 3 • Number 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE LIBRARIES



Pi Beta Phi Barn

A Smoky Mountain Scrapbook

by Merikay Waldvogel

Who knows how long the tattered leather scrapbook lay unopened in a California antique store? The book dealer explained, "I don't usually handle scrapbooks, but I knew it would have some historical significance to someone interested in the Great Smoky Mountains area." Indeed, it does.

UT Libraries' Smokies bibliographer Anne Bridges located the 1936 scrapbook, compiled by Rosemary Moorehead, via an Internet search. It was purchased for the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Collection with funds from the local Aslan foundation. Bridges describes the scrapbook as "exactly the kind of material we would like to add to the Collection. It adds a personal perspective that you cannot find in published sources."

As someone interested in Appalachian crafts, I was eager to turn the pages of the album, entitled *An Impression of the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School and Its Vicinity*. After my first appointment to view the scrapbook, I volunteered to research the album and its contents further. What a treasure trove!

The album contains 73 b/w photos—neatly captioned snapshots of Gatlinburg and its residents taken in the 1930s at about the time the National Park opened. Students, staff and teachers of Pi Beta Phi Settlement School pose

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All photographs are from the scrapbook compiled by Rosemary Moorehead



Roosevelt in Gatlinburg

Great Smoky Mountains Colloquy is a newsletter published by The University of Tennessee Libraries.

Co-editors:
Anne Bridges
Russ Clement
Kenneth Wise

Correspondence and
change of address:
GSM Colloquy
152 John C. Hodges Library
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-1000
865/974-0017
865/974-9242 (fax)
Email: smokies@aztec.lib.utk.edu
Web: www.lib.utk.edu/refs/smokies/

The school bus





Eleanor Brabson, Miriam Swan, Mary Durkee, Pauline Campbell, and Rosemary Moorehead, elementary school teachers.



Gatlinburg in the snow

The Pi Beta Phi Settlement School

In response to their mission of educational outreach to children in communities without schools, the national Pi Beta Phi female fraternity in the early years of the twentieth century embarked on an ambitious program of bringing settlement schools into the fastness of the Great Smoky Mountains. Gatlinburg was chosen as the location for the first settlement school because of the town's lack of educational facilities. After months of local negotiations, the school was opened in 1912 and quickly expanded to include health services and a craft shop. The craft shop, originally christened "Arrowcraft" after the fraternity's symbol of the arrow, remains a thriving business today. The name Arrowcraft was later changed to Arrowmont, reflecting a wider mission of instructional programs in the arts. Although Gatlinburg looks very different today from the photographs taken by Rosemary Moorehead, many of the original Pi Beta Phi buildings still exist, hidden away from the Parkway in the center of Gatlinburg.

and grin for the camera. Mountain women head to the Arrowcraft Shop, their horses laden with hand woven baskets.

In photos of Myrtle Point and Cliff Top at Mount Le Conte, teachers gaze at sunsets and sunrises—just as hikers do today. President Roosevelt waved to her camera in October 1936. This scrapbook encapsulates a memorable time of fun, adventure, and even romance. "Who was Rosemary Moorehead? Why did she make this scrapbook and how did it get from Tennessee to California?"

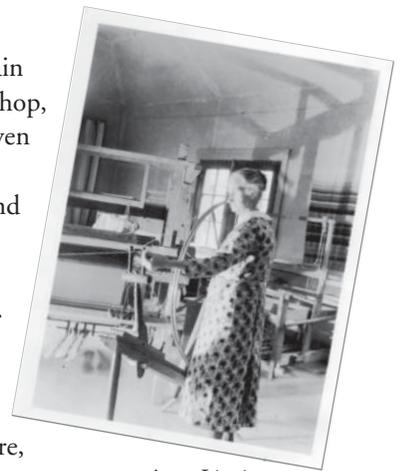
Let the search begin! I found Rosemary in one photo with four other elementary school teachers. I knew the school recruited its teachers from Pi Beta Phi chapters around the country. The Pi Beta Phi Fraternity founded the settlement school in 1912 and is still involved in the support of the elementary school, the Arrowcraft Shop, and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, although each is funded through a variety of sources.

Through the Pi Beta Phi Internet website, I reached Fran Becque, Pi Beta Phi's archivist. She wrote, "Yes, Rosemary Moorehead was a Pi Phi. She graduated from Millikin College in Decatur, Illinois in 1935 and so did Pauline Requarth," whose photo I also found in the scrapbook!

Later, I located both women who have remained close friends. Rosemary Moorehead Barnwell lives in Oakland, California and Pauline Requarth Smith in Decatur. Due to Rosemary's fragile health, Pauline volunteered to answer my questions. I sent her copies of pages of her friend's photo album. We talked and corresponded. She kept Rosemary apprised of the developments.

Rosemary Moorehead grew up in Decatur, not far from the Millikin campus. She was musical as a young girl and majored in English in college. After graduation, a Pi Phi alum suggested she and Pauline apply to work at the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. Rosemary taught in the elementary school. Pauline took a bookkeeping job.

The two young women lived in the Teacher's Cottage from the Fall of 1935 through the Spring of 1937. Pauline kept the records for the school and the Arrowcraft Shop. Her monthly pay was \$60 the first year, rising to \$80 the next year. A room and board fee of twenty dollars was deducted from her salary.



Aunt Lizzie at a loom in the school weaving room

In the scrapbook, Rosemary included graphs of her fifth and sixth graders' intelligence test scores, a program for a Christmas pageant, a copy of the school newsletter, and her students' crayon drawings. Tucked into the back were two weavings by school children. I concluded her scrapbook might have served as some kind of an official report.

Rosemary met her future husband, Joe Barnwell, in Gatlinburg where he was an engineer with the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. They married in the spring of 1937 and moved to North Carolina. After his career in the Navy, they settled in Berkeley, California, where Joe worked as a city planner. When her husband died in 1997, Rosemary sold her house and moved to an assisted living facility in Oakland. I imagine in the move, the scrapbook disappeared—only to find a “new” and appropriate home 2500 miles away.

Why is this scrapbook such an important find? It adds a fresh, new and different perspective to the history of Gatlinburg, the Pi Beta Phi School, and its vicinity. This is the view of a young woman obviously enthralled by and dedicated to her students, the local people, and the Smoky Mountains. Long-time residents of Gatlinburg will recognize familiar places and faces.

The University of Tennessee Library has placed a color photocopy of the entire scrapbook at the Anna Porter Public Library in Gatlinburg. After necessary preservation treatment, the original scrapbook will be held at The University of Tennessee's Special Collections Library.

Merikay Waldvogel is a quilt historian and author living in Knoxville. See *Appalachian Life Magazine*, February-March 2002 for her cover story about the Pi Beta Phi Scrapbook and her regular column “On Quilts” with a story based on a photo found in this album. For information, phone: 423-639-4031 and web: www.appalachianlife.com.



Murrell Reagon, winner of the high school popularity contest, is given a ride by Hoover, the town tramp.

Notable New Book

Stephen Wallace Taylor. *The New South's New Frontier: A Social History of Economic Development in Southwestern North Carolina*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001. 187 pages.

The most enduring image of the social and cultural heritage of the mountainous region of southwestern North Carolina is that popularized by Horace Kephart in *Our Southern Highlanders* in which the native mountaineers are characterized as isolated, romantic, backward, and inhabiting a static and solitary place Kephart christened “The Back of Beyond.” Kephart fosters this image of the isolated highlander perhaps because that is what he wanted to find when he abandoned his wife, family, career, and civilized life to enter this “back of beyond” in search of himself; nevertheless, his caricature of the Smoky Mountain highlander spawned a generation of popular writers seeking to confirm Kephart's expectations.

Stephen Wallace Taylor, in the recently released *The New South's New Frontier: A Social History of Economic Development in Southwestern North Carolina*, challenges the anachronistic sentimentalism of Kephart and his literary successors by examining the pattern of economic and social diversity of the region and thus demonstrating the greater similarities than differences between the Smoky Mountain region and the rest of the South. Taylor shows that the region was not isolated from the larger currents of American society as Kephart implies, but was actually receptive to the influences of land speculation, industrialization, transient labor, company towns, market economy, and the spirit of commercial enterprise that characterized other communities across the South. Taylor focuses his story on the communities along upper reaches of the Little Tennessee valley and the effects on these communities by the arrival of the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Yet, while challenging the myth of Kephart's fictive “back of beyond,” Taylor is also careful to remind the reader of the power of myth in the shaping of southern history.

More photos from
Rosemary Moorehead's scrapbook...



Basket room



Fireplace in the Arrowmont Shop



Bringing baskets to the shop



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The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-1000