

Vanishing Appalachia

PRESS RELEASE

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At the Museum Center at Five Points:

Vanishing Appalachia: Photographs by Don Dudenbostel, Field Recordings by Tom Jester, a traveling exhibition which provides visitors with a fascinating glimpse into aspects of Appalachian culture that are fading from existence, opens at the The Museum Center at Five Points on March 24, 2012 and runs through June 30.

With camera and recorder in hand, photographer Don Dudenbostel and field recordist Tom Jester spent several years documenting the people, places, and practices of Appalachia, capturing among them some aspects of Appalachian life infrequently practiced but nevertheless associated with the region in the public consciousness. In the exhibition, visitors meet Pastor James E. “Jimmy” Morrow who preaches at a church where they “take up the serpent;” legendary Cocke County, Tennessee, moonshiner “Popcorn” Sutton; and farmer and cock fighter Steve Turner. Other images document the passing of Mennonite communities where life played out much as it did in the mid-1800s; the less savory existence of the Ku Klux Klan; and scenic points along Appalachian roadways now infringed upon by modern development, such as tourist courts, ferries, filling stations, peanut stands, and local grocery stores.

The exhibit aims to explore the concept and stereotypes people often have of Appalachia by placing the featured subjects within the larger historical context. “The exhibition is meant to be a conversation, not a full sermon, within the larger discussion of what it means to be an Appalachian, sustained today by scholars, public historians, popular authors, media producers, local residents, outsiders, and the like,” noted Adam H. Alfrey, the exhibition’s curator. “The photographs and field recordings offer rare access to people and places that many Appalachians have heard of but relatively few have chosen to visit or participate in.”

Vanishing Appalachia: Photographs by Don Dudenbostel, Field Recordings by Tom Jester is an award-winning exhibition project of the Museum of East Tennessee History operated by the East Tennessee Historical Society in Knoxville, Tennessee (www.eastTNhistory.org). The exhibition project was made possible through a grant from the Gene and Florence Monday Foundation.

A catalog and CD of recordings featured in the exhibition is available for purchase at Museum Center at Five Points Giftshop.

The Museum Center at Five Points is located at 200 Inman Street E. in Cleveland, Tennessee and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10-5 and Saturday from 10-3. Please call 423-339-5745 for details, or visit museumcenter.org.