



THE EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM of EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY

Making history personal

For Immediate Release

Press Contact: Cherel Henderson, Director

865-215-8823 | 865-335-0888

cherel@eastTNhistory.org

www.eastTNhistory.org

**“American Enka and the Modern Labor Movement”
New Traveling Exhibition from the East Tennessee Historical Society
on Display in Morristown**

EXHIBITION: American Enka and the
Modern Labor Movement

DATE: January 20-March 30, 2012

LOCATION: Rose Center
Hal A. Noe Gallery
442 West Second North St.
Morristown, TN



Enka Plant Entrance in 1948

Thanks to a generous support grant from Humanities Tennessee, an independent affiliate of the National Endowment of the Humanities, the East Tennessee Historical is expanding its traveling exhibition program with “American Enka and the Modern Labor Movement,” which will be on display January 20- March 30, 2012 at the Rose Center in Morristown.

The 1950 strike at the American Enka plant in Hamblen County is the subject of the exhibition, “American Enka and the Modern Labor Movement.” Guest curated by Auburn University Associate Professor of History Jennifer E. Brooks, the exhibition examines the strike and the conditions that led to it in the context of the modern labor movement in the South following World War II.

The strike began in March 1950, when workers at the at the rayon plant walked out on strike. Before long, the company advertised for replacement workers. Tension built as people from local and surrounding communities appeared at the Enka gates to apply for the jobs to replace the striking workers.

In the violence that followed, shots were fired, cars damaged, and a home dynamited. Tennessee Governor Gordon Browning dispatched National Guard troops to restore order. Before its end, the strike became national front-page news and was later the

subject of onsite congressional hearings held in Morristown and led by Hubert Humphrey for the Democratic majority.

The traveling exhibit is rich with period photographs that illustrate the story of the strikers and those who sought to replace them. Among the original items featured are artifacts from the American Enka plant in Hamblen County and a dress made from nylon produced at an American Enka plant.

“American Enka and the Modern Labor Movement” will be on display at the Rose Center in the Hal A. Noe Gallery, 442 West Second North Street in Morristown. Hours are Monday- Wednesday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thursday 9 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; and by appointment on Saturday. For more information visit www.rosecenter.org or call (423) 581-4307.

The “American Enka and the Modern Labor Movement” exhibition is supported by a grant from Humanities Tennessee, an independent affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Museum of East Tennessee History and its traveling exhibition program are coordinated by the East Tennessee Historical Society and is located in the East Tennessee History Center at 601 South Gay Street in downtown Knoxville. For more information about the permanent or traveling exhibitions of the East Tennessee Historical Society, please contact Adam Alfrey at 865-215-8832 or by e-mail at aalfrey@knoxlib.org.

End Release