



THE EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM of EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY

Making history personal

For Immediate Release

Press Contact: Cherel Henderson, Director
865-215-8823 | 865-933-5232
cherel@eastTNhistory.org
www.eastTNhistory.org

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Woven of Wood: East Tennessee Baskets, 1880-1940
New feature exhibition opening at the
Museum of East Tennessee History

WHAT: *Woven of Wood: East Tennessee Baskets, 1880-1940*, feature exhibition

DATE: Open March 17—June 1, 2014

LOCATION: East Tennessee History Center
601 S. Gay Street
Knoxville, TN 37902



(Knoxville, TN) Imagine doing away with shopping bags, plastic buckets, and manufactured storage tubs of today and depending instead upon baskets. You would quickly recognize the essential role that these hand-woven containers of wood played in bygone days. Baskets were some of the most functional and creative possessions in everyday life.

During the past year, the East Tennessee Historical Society has worked to document the traditional basket makers of our region. Materials and construction details have been recorded. For those baskets where the maker's identity is known, family stories and photographs have also been collected. *Woven of Wood* highlights selected examples from this survey.

The exhibition is sponsored in honor of Natalie L. Haslam with additional support from the Arts & Heritage Fund. Community partners include the Dogwood Arts Festival and the Foothills Craft Guild. The exhibition will be on display at the Museum of East Tennessee History through June 1, 2014.

Corresponding programs include:

- **Noon, April 2, Brown Bag Lecture:** *Getting to Know the Walker Sisters* by Merikay Waldvogel
- **April 25-27:** Foothills Craft Guild member demonstrations in ETHS lobby; part of the Dogwood Arts Festival's Market Square Arts Fair
- **April 27:** Special demonstration by featured basket maker Billy Ray Sims
- **2:00 p.m., April 27, Casual Basket Sunday:** Traditional U.S. baskets, 1880-1940, including Native American

- **Noon, May 14, Brown Bag:** *The Forgotten Basket of the Mountain* by Bill Alexander
- **2:00 p.m., May 18, Casual Basket Sunday:** Worldwide, any time period, including contemporary baskets

The Museum of East Tennessee History is open 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Saturday; and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Sunday. The Museum is located in the East Tennessee History Center, 601 South Gay Street, Knoxville, TN 37901. For more information call (865) 215-8830, email eths@eastTNhistory.org, or visit www.easttnhistory.org.

Basket quotes:

“No other handcraft has been an identifiable part of human society for so long or has changed so little over the centuries.... Unfortunately, the humble origins and everyday functions of traditional baskets have long obscured their cultural and artistic importance.

“For those willing to pay attention, a traditional basket teaches respect for the American past, for our ancestors’ slower, more natural rhythms, their attention to small but practical details, and their unwavering desire to integrate beauty and utility.”

--Robert Shaw, *American Baskets*

“.... by recording and analyzing the basket’s construction, its structural details, and the relationships between these baskets and styles or details and particular geographical locations, it often becomes possible to link baskets to specific makers, regions, and ethnic traditions.... we realized that within a particular tradition, individual variations exist that allow one to say with some confidence who made a basket.”

--Law and Taylor,
Appalachian White Oak Basketmaking

“No skill has a longer and more varied history than weaving.... The weaving of wood, too, has played a vital role in the evolution of mankind. Houses, boats, beds, baskets, fences, dams and many other essentials have been woven from wood.”

--Stanton and Cowan, *Stout Hearts*

Caption for image:

Large pale green splint basket attributed to the Henry family, Scott County. Red wall basket, rod and plank construction, made by the Hickey family of East Tennessee. Glossy light natural rib basket, attributed to the Waldrop family, Greene County.

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