Envisioning a Sustainable Future for Unicoi County: Agriculture, Agritourism, and Cultural Tourism

A Museum Exhibition Designed by the Fall 2013 Documenting Community Traditions Class at East Tennessee State University

Photo Credit:
Marjorie Richardson

ETSU
East Tennessee State University

“Take care of the land and the land will take care of you.”

Ed and Janice Honeycutt
Blackberry Blossom Farm

Micah Carter

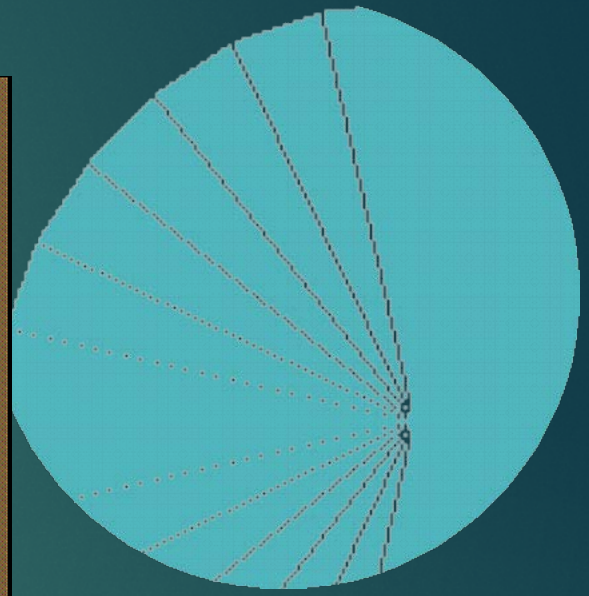
DCT STUDENTS HARD AT WORK

Theresa Lloyd

Theresa Lloyd

TANASI EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

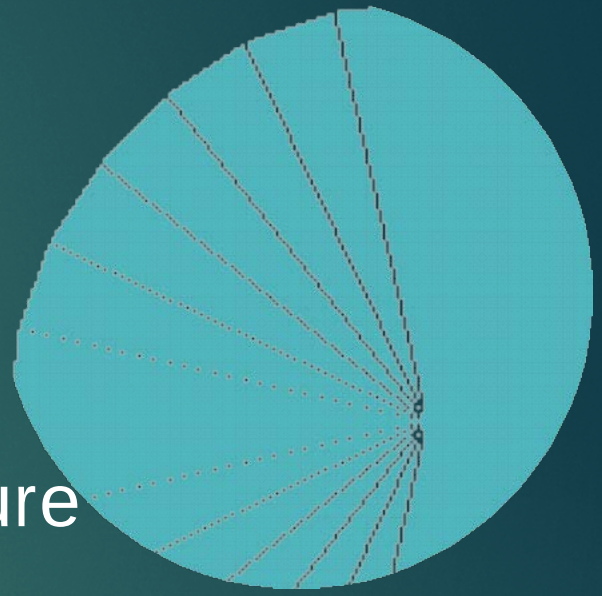
Courtesy of Theresa Lloyd



Exhibition Outline

Overview of Unicoi County

A. History and Heritage
B. Transitions
C. Creative Practices for Present and Future
D. Conclusion
E. Acknowledgements

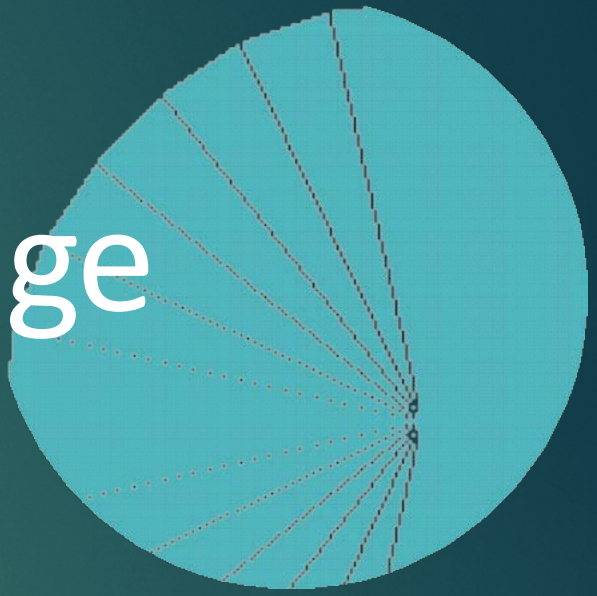


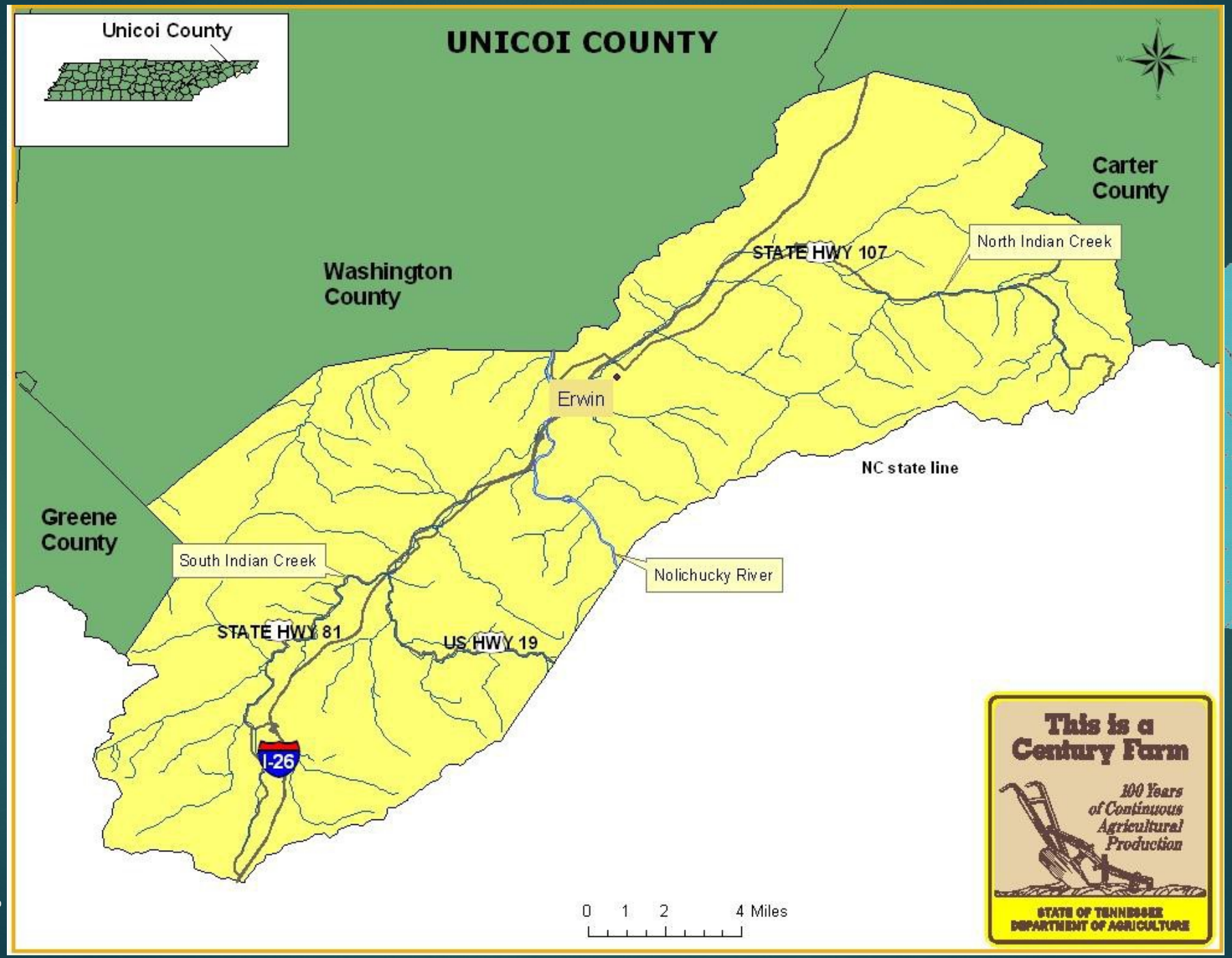
Reece Museum Gallery

Becky Hyder

By Hydereck

History and Heritage




Unicoi County
UNICOI COUNTY
Carter County
Washington County
STATE HWY 107
North Indian Creek
Erwin
NC state line
Greene County
South Indian Creek
Nolichucky River
STATE HWY 81
US HWY 19
I-26
0 1 2 4 Miles
This is a Century Farm
100 Years of Continuous Agricultural Production
STATE OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Google

Town of Unicoi Accomplishments

Bogart-Bowman Cabin

Tanasi Interior

Jack Snider Park and Trailhead

From the Past

Mary Monique Johnson

Mary Monique Johnson

Mary Monique Johnson

Breaking Beans in Limestone Cove

Courtesy of Mark Stevens

Bertha and Pleasey Sneyd

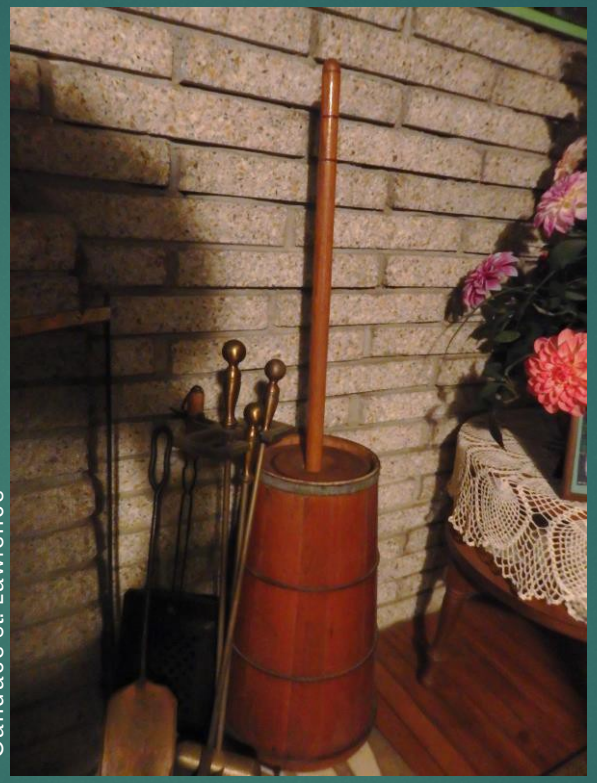
Marjorie Richardson

Typical Canning Supplies

Remembering the old days...

Bertha Byrd

Candace St. Lawrence



Candace St. Lawrence

Velva Byrd's Favorite Churn

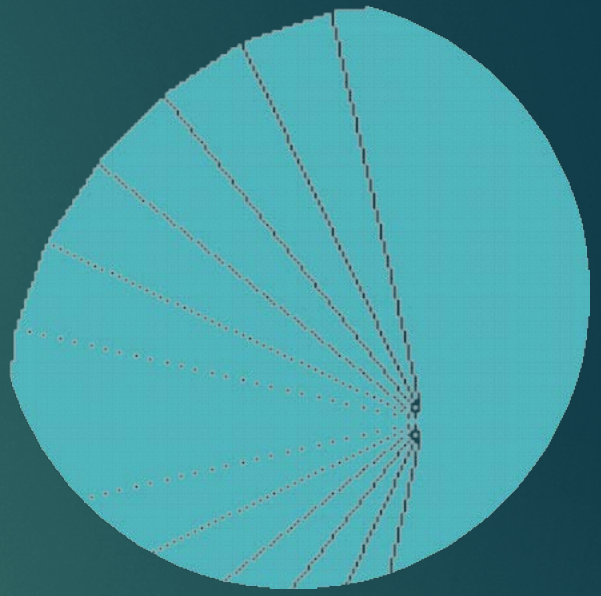
Jessica Brooks

Lennis Tipton's

Mary Monique Johnson

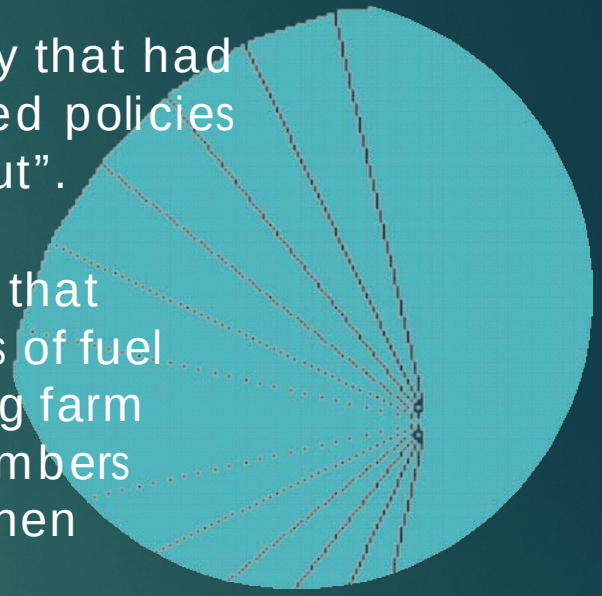
Wooden Barrels

Transitions



Example of Exhibit Panel Text

Transitions, 1970 – Today



In the 1970s, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz reversed a farm policy that had stabilized grain production and prices for decades and implemented policies encouraging monolithic agribusinesses. Butz said "Get big or get out".

Farmers in Unicoi County had trouble competing with agribusinesses that were operated for the highest profit and the least costs. Rising costs of fuel pushed up the cost of everything from seeds to equipment, including farm labor – already difficult to find in Unicoi County. Younger family members were no longer as interested in continuing to work on family farms when educational and job opportunities became available.

Federal quota and support systems for tobacco, Unicoi County's major cash, were phased out so no more was grown after 2004.

Small and mountainous Unicoi County lost farm land with the construction of Interstate-26 and even more to development. Five hundred eighty two farms were lost between 1964 and 2007.

Marjorie Richardson

Mr. and Mrs. Dorsey Edwards

"I was working out the money down there (at Nuclear Fuels) and putting it into the farming. And then working twice as hard to get the same money back at the end. We lived better me working on the job and quitting the farming."

- Dorsey Edwards

Before and After Interstate-26

1968

Courtesy of Mark Stevens

Current

Google Earth

Unicoi County Agricultural Census

	1945	1950	1959	1964	1978	1982	1992	1997	2002	2007*
Farms	1068	926	741	668	365	363	237	155	166	86
Average acres	39	43	47	46	43	39	48	48	56	55
% Tobacco	48%	53%	80%	81%	-	86%	62%	54%	20%	0%
% Hogs	55%	63%	-	19%	3%	1%	3%	5%	2%	0%
% Cattle	84%	79%	64%	72%	22%	20%	44%	57%	42%	47%
% Dairy	-	72%	56%	41%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
% Fruit	-	-	26%	16%	7%	4%	7%	12%	9%	9%

* Last available data

Unicoi Agribusiness, New Faces

Scott Farms

Wayne Scott

Julia Ledesma de Rusinol

Florentino Porras and Sons

Creative Practices for the
Present and Future

Creative Marketing

The farmer must develop creative ways to market produce to make small farming pay. Marketing produce directly to the consumer provides the farmer with a greater return, enabling a smaller quantity to still cover costs. Additionally, if produce is used to make a product with greater sale value (*value added*), it will generate a higher return per bushel. An example is making cider, apple butter or jelly to sell instead of selling fresh apples.
Agritourism brings the customer to the farm. U-pick orchards and berry patches reduce costs for transporting the product to an outside market. U-pick markets provide a positive farm experience to the customer and reduce the labor needed by the farmer. The scenic beauty in Unicoi County allows the small farms to provide other recreational experiences, such as herbal classes, musical events and sites for weddings.
Another approach for direct marketing of farm products to the customer is the farmers market. These markets provide an opportunity for the customer to get to know the farmer and to get fresher produce. Farmers markets offer the farmers an opportunity to build networks between themselves and often with small businesses such as specialty restaurants and positive feedback to the farmers for the special contribution they bring to the community.

BRINGING THE CUSTOMER TO THE FARM

AGRITOURISM

Blossom Farm and Campground in Unicoi is an example of combining farming and tourism. Ed and Janice Honeycutt describe their farm as a "bio-diversified blackberry and heirloom fruit and vegetable operation with a tent campground." The campground features a bathhouse, and a country store. The front porch of the store has rockers, inviting customers to sit awhile and socialize or sip an herbal blackberry tonic. Started in 2000, the farm has developed a variety of other marketing venues including participation in a Farmers Market and the production of a number of value added items using their produce, such as a hot pepper blackberry jelly.

BRINGING THE PRODUCE TO THE CUSTOMER

FARMERS MARKETS

The town of Unicoi has had a farmers market for two seasons. Open Friday mornings, 8 am to 12 noon, the market is held in the parking lot of the Unicoi Information Center just off Interstate 26 offers local farmers a differat exit 32. The timing for this market ent day for marketing their products than the larger markets held in Johnson City and Jonesborough on Saturdays. The Erwin farmers market is no longer operating, so this is the only farmers market in Unicoi Country presently.

FUTURE PLANS

THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Incubator kitchens provide USDA approved facilities for production of value added agricultural products. These facilities reduce start-up costs which encourages individuals, civic groups and small business to produce farm products which have greater value than the raw ingredients. Value added products are an important component in making small farming economically sustainable. These kitchens are managed by trained personnel who are capable of providing instruction and supervision to ensure compliance with FDA standards.

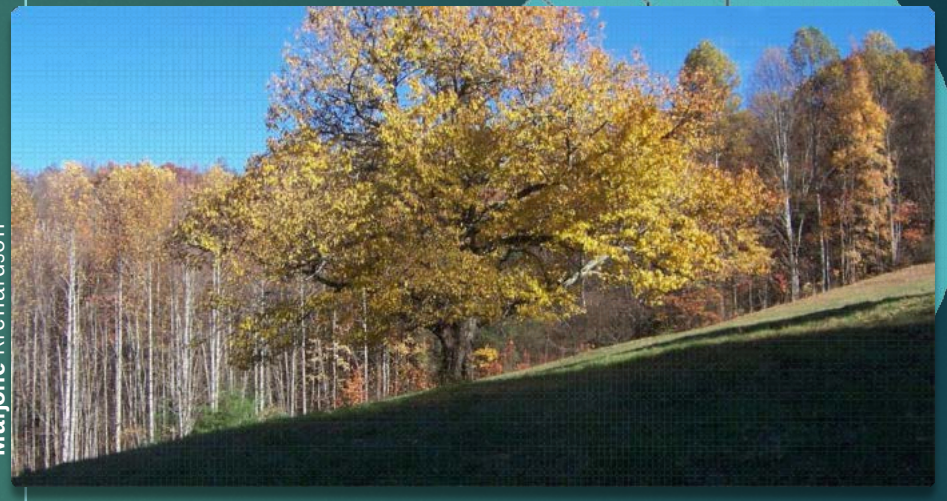
The town of Unicoi in partnership with local educational institutions, departments of agriculture and health, civic organizations and local growers is acquiring the funding necessary to build this kitchen. Design for the facility is in progress. With a wealth of locally grown fruit, Unicoi is at an advantage for raw materials to be transformed into local produced products, such as jam, jelly, salsa and sauces.

Tiptons' "*The Cows Are Out Dairy*"

Becky Hyder

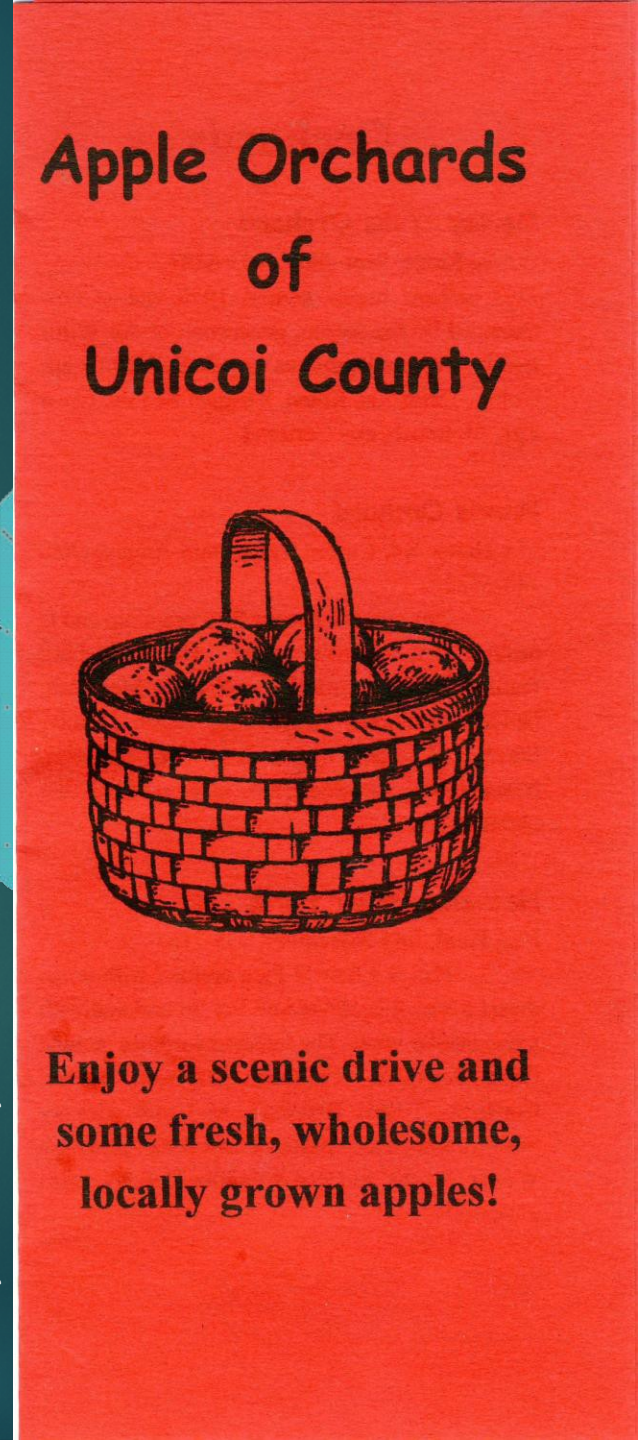
Apple Orchards

David Moore
Heavenly Hollow
on Flag Pond



Apple Tree in Fall on
Coffee Ridge

Information Brochure on Unicoi County Apple Orchards prepared by Ty Petty, UT Agriculture Extension Agent



Courtesy of Theresa Lloyd

Community Kitchen

Courtesy of Town of Unicoi

Mary Monique Johnson

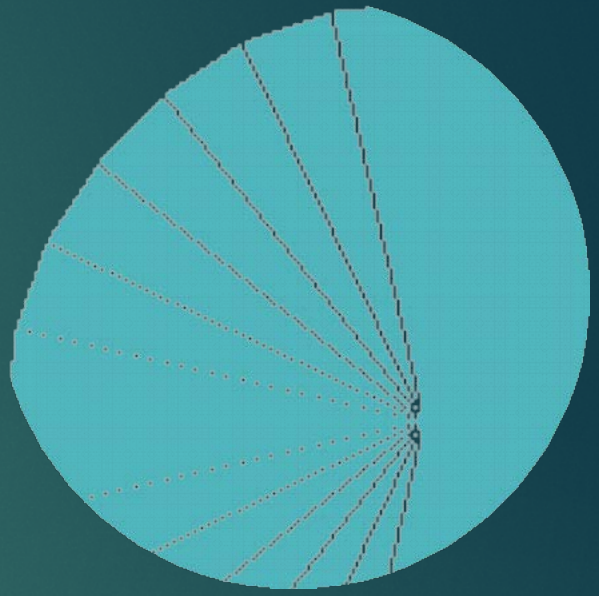
Mary Monique Johnson

“Nothing succeeds like success”

Mary Monique Johnson

Mary Monique Johnson

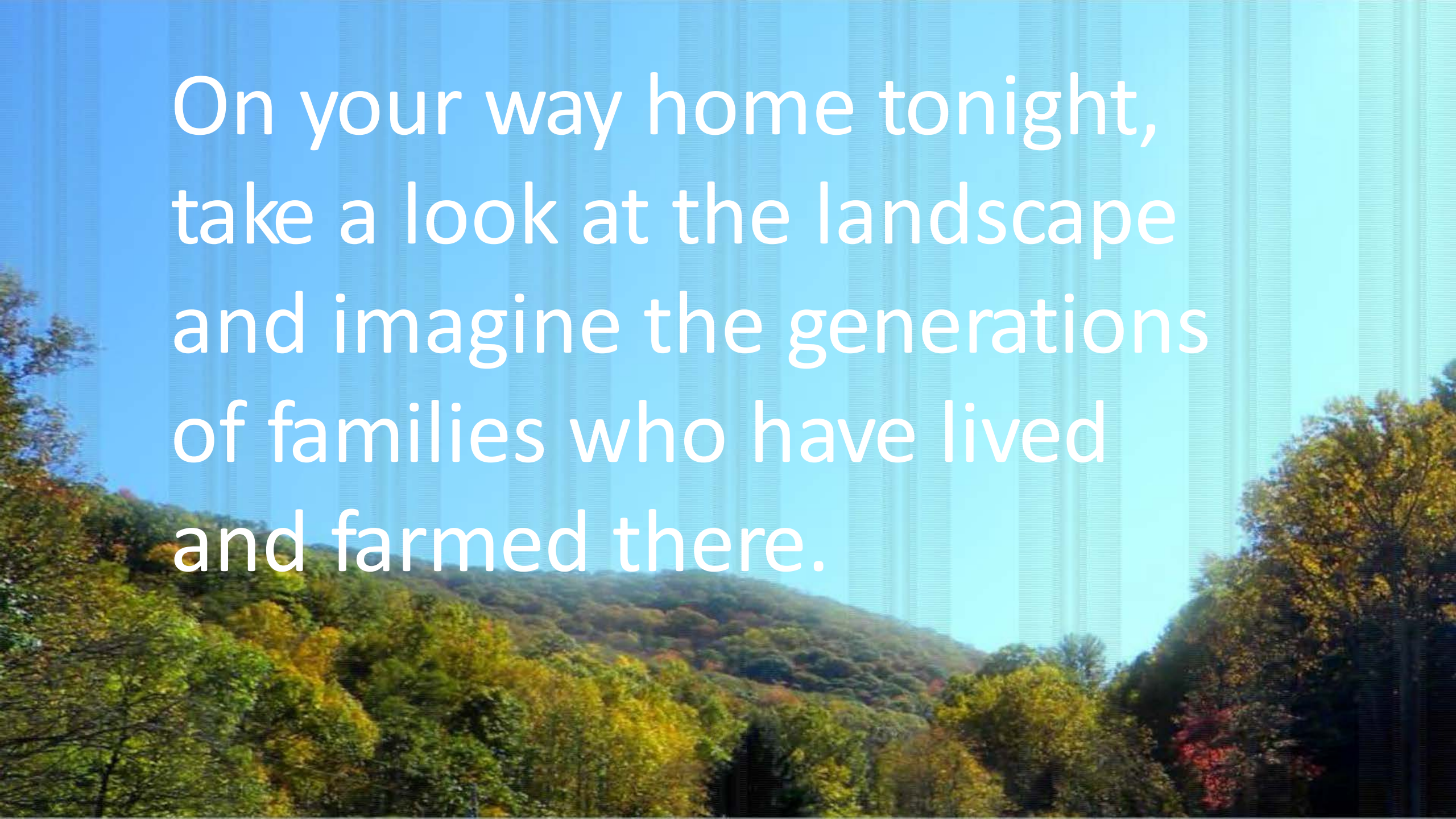
Unicoi Farmers using creative approaches to sustainable economy today



Mical Carter

Blackberry Blossom Campground Store

Meredith Douglas Moore


On your way home tonight,
take a look at the landscape
and imagine the generations
of families who have lived
and farmed there.

The next time you buy groceries, think about where each item came from. Has Unicoi played a part in feeding your family?

Meredith Douglas Moore

Acknowledgements

- Appalachian Regional Commission
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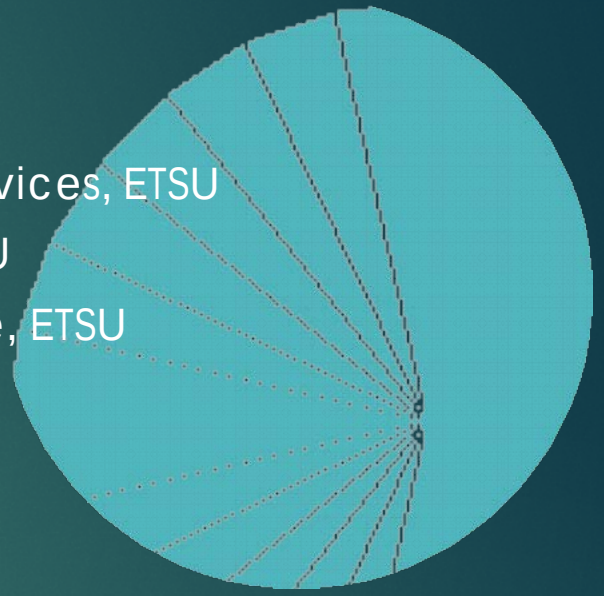
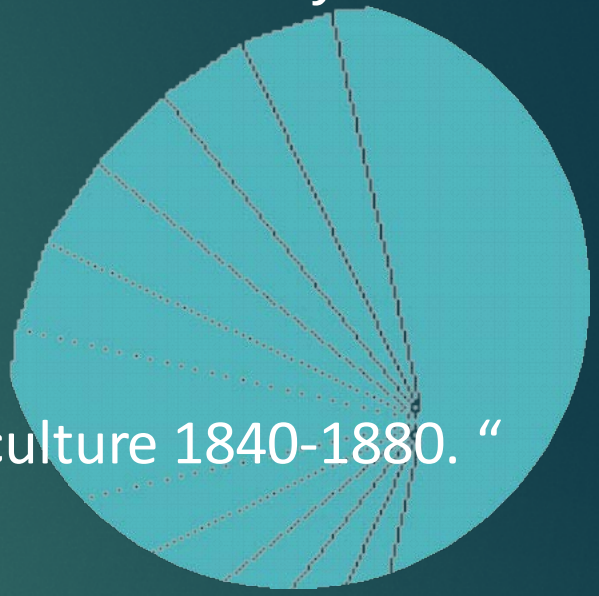
- Dr. John Lewis, Appalachian Historian and Former DCT Professor
- Johnny Lynch, Mayor, Town of Unicoi
- Larry Rea, Recorder, Town of Unicoi
- Ty Petty, UT Agriculture Extension Agent, Unicoi County
- Jan Barnett
- Students: Rachel Edens, Carolina Quiroga Hurtado, Becky Hyder, Marjorie Richardson, Candace St. Lawrence, Kalia Yeagle



Bibliography

In addition to interviews conducted with 48 farmers from Unicoi County the following print sources were used:



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