

Matt Gardner Homestead Museum Newsletter

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February 2008

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The Matt Gardner Story

Matt Gardner's triumphs and successes during slavery, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow Era were well known by the people who lived in and around Giles County and went through some of the same trying times as he did. But by the early 21st century, the accomplishments of Matt Gardner, what he had done for his community, what he stood for, and how he gave support to so many people, had all just about faded away

from everyone's memory except for a few life-long, elderly Giles County residents. Many people in and around Giles knew little, if anything, about the African American plight to freedom in their community. But luckily Matt's story was preserved in the land and house he owned, as well as the local newspapers, court house records, schools, churches, and a few elder family members and community friends of the past.



Well, the Matt Gardner story will be around for generations to come, thanks to his story being published in the Heritage of Giles

County, Tennessee (Walsworth Publishing, 2006) and in the African American National Biography (AANB). The AANB is a joint project of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University and Oxford University Press. The African American National Biography is an eight-volume set of books scheduled to be published this February and will include a wide range of African Americans from all time periods and all walks of life, both famous and some nearly-forgotten. We are pleased to have Matt's story among many other great and famous African Americans. The museum is very excited and thankful to Dr. Henry Louis Gates and Kate Tuttle for the opportunity to share Matt's story with future researchers, scholars, and students. Most importantly, we value the chance to continue to preserve Matt's story and keep it from being lost so future generations may gain something positive from his experiences. There is an online edition of the Oxford African American Studies Center that will also include all the AANB entries. To purchase a copy of the AANB or to learn more about the online version please see: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~aanb>

Upcoming Programs and Events

The museum will sponsor an event for the city of Elkton's 200 year anniversary which will be held Saturday June 7, 2008. The next edition of the newsletter will have more details as to the type of event, time and if the event will be held at the farmstead museum or another location. We invite everyone to come to Elkton and share in the celebration.....so mark your calendars.

Restoration Progress Update:

October 2007:

Completion of the
new front porch



February 2008:

Miller Renovations will repair and restore
the chimney

Matt Gardner Homestead Museum

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Wow! Did You See It

If you are going through Giles County via US Highway 31, you can't miss it. That is the big, bright yellow-and-black sign that says: "Coming Soon the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum." The sign lets locals and passersby know that we will soon be open as a historic and cultural site. The sign is a big step for all of us as we look forward to our hard work paying off through the education and inspiration of visitors to the museum.

Website:

In December, we received grants from two organizations in support of the creation of a website for the museum. Currently we are in the process of designing the site and expect it to be up and functional by the end of March. The next issue of the newsletter will highlight the launch of the new site.

A Special Thank You.....and Thank You

A special thank you goes out to Antoinette van Zelm, a historian for the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The Heritage Area and the Center for Historic Preservation at MTSU have partnered with the museum since its formation. Heritage Area and Center staff members are committed to helping make the Matt Gardner museum a success, and they provide advice, encouragement, and professional services.

Antoinette answers a lot of questions, provides direction and editorial advice, and most importantly shares the story of Matt Gardner and the Homestead Museum whenever there is an opportunity. Whatever we need help with, she is there to give her expertise and professional assistance to make sure that everything is accurate and is well presented to every audience.

Whoops! Now the secret is out; you all thought it was our president**Antoinette, we could not have done it without you, Thank You!**

Thank you to the following organizations and corporations for their continued support and for grants awarded to the museum in the past six months:

Tennessee Wars Commission
Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area
Humanities Tennessee
Wal-Mart of Pulaski, Giles County, Tennessee

Thank you and welcome aboard to our first founders, patrons, and members:

Founders:

Mr. Raymond Gardner , Ms. Jewel Bailey

Bronze Patrons:

Mr. & Mrs. Thurman Coleman , Ms. Nellie McKay-Brown,
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Jennings, Mr. & Mrs. Jesse Lowery

New Members:

Ms. Rosa Harding, Mr. Keith Harding, Ms. Evelyn Benson-Hughes, Ms. Floradine Wilson, Ms. Diane Bridgeforth-Brown, Ms. Lula Bridgeforth, Mr. Bernard Rushing, Mr. David Holt, Mr. & Mrs. Craig Armstrong and Ms. Gladys King