

## **Kentucky's Mountain Lake HERITAGE TOURISM**

Once the early settlers found their way to Southeastern Kentucky they had to adjust to new ways of life in a new land. Family became more important than ever before, as they had to work closely together just to complete the daily chores. Today, visitors can still get a sense of how life was for those early pioneers by tracing their footsteps across a field to a humble cabin built with sweat and tears, to the small gravestone out back where an infant was laid to rest, to the schools that gave all of them hope for a better future.

Housing ran the gamut from the most simple structure to those that were, by standards of that time, grand. At one end of the spectrum, Gladie Creek Historic Site features a reconstructed historic log house, the only remaining structure in the Red River Gorge dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, the Owings House is Federal-style dwelling constructed from 1811 to 1814. According to J. A. Richards in the History of Bath County, the Owings House was built as the result of a friendly contest between Colonel Thomas Deye Owings and Richard Menefee after Bath County, Kentucky, was formed in 1811. These two prominent citizens had each donated a portion of the land on which the county seat was to be situated. The winner of the contest was to be the one who could build the finest home in the shortest length of time with the prize to be the naming of the town. Col. Owings hired Benjamin Latrobe (who also designed the United States Capitol) and constructed a mansion that featured the largest unsupported spiral staircase in a private dwelling in North America. This historic landmark carried on his name, as did the town.

A stroll through many towns in the Mountain Lake Corridor also gives a glimpse of days gone by. Filled with gracious old homes and Victorian commercial buildings, Historic Main Street in Owingsville is one of Kentucky's most beautiful downtown areas, including the 1812 Owings House and Bank, 1866 Courthouse and 1938 school. A walking tour of downtown Frenchburg, too, takes you past historic buildings such as the 1929 courthouse, 1926 church and the buildings that housed the first high school in Menifee county. You can pick up a tour map at the local Chamber of Commerce.

While most of the land this corridor proved to be unsuitable for farming, the coal and lumber industries prospered, providing a wealth of jobs for the region. These and other aspects of daily life are well documented in various museums, including the Morgan County History Museum, the Memory Hill Foundation Museum, the Woodsbend Museum and Park, the Swamp Valley Museum and even the Kentucky Folk Art Center. Heritage offerings in the Mountain Lake Corridor include, but are not limited to:

**Owings House** (606-674-6361), located at the intersection of Main Street and Courthouse Square in Owingsville, is a federal-style mansion that was built between 1811 and 1814 and named after Col. Thomas Deye Owings, for whom the town was also

named. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and now houses the Owingsville Banking Company.

**Gladie Creek Historic Site** (606-663-2852) features a reconstructed historic log house, the only remaining structure in the Red River Gorge dating back to the early logging period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The visitor information center at the Gladie Historic Site is situated on a gently sloping terrace overlooking the confluence of Gladie Creek and the North Fork of the Red River. The site also features a blacksmith shop, a moonshine still and small herd of bison. This historic site and accompanying Cultural and Environmental Learning Center is located on West College Avenue in Stanton.

**Morgan County History Museum** (606-743-2588), located in the former Morgan county jail that was built as a WPA project in 1936, features a number of military artifacts. The museum's focus is history, specifically pertaining to the early citizens and industry of the area. The museum, located on Main Street in West Liberty, also honors veterans that have served the nation dating back as far as the Civil War.

**Kentucky Folk Art Center** (606-783-2204), housed in a renovated, early 1900's grocery warehouse on Morehead's West First Street, is the only museum dedicated to Kentucky folk art, perhaps the most authentic reflections of Appalachian culture. The works of contemporary folk artists are displayed and sold in the museum store.

**Swamp Valley Museum** (606-768-3250), located on Hwy. 406 in Denniston, is a unique museum that features a 70-year collection of local memorabilia showcased in several buildings. Exhibits include a doctor's office, casket shop, cheese-making shop and tools dating back to the 1920's.

**Memory Hill Foundation Museum** (606-743-4482), located at 89 Memory Hill Lane in West Liberty, is a colonial home and eight cabins with a large collection of cultural antiques and heritage exhibits. There are two monuments recognizing two early pioneers. The foundation is dedicated to the preservation and exhibition of the cultural and genealogical heritage of Morgan County.

**Woodsbend Museum and Park** (606-743-3677), located on West Liberty's Tree Nursery Road on Rte. 705, was established to preserve history for future generations. The museum has farming tools and equipment dating back to the 1920's as well as an old grist mill and playground/picnic area.

**Bourbon Iron Furnace** (606-674-6346) dates back to 1791, when the Bourbon Iron Works was the first iron blast furnace west of the Allegheny Mountains and one of Kentucky's earliest industries. It produced cannon balls and grape shot for the war of 1812, as well as farm and home implements. Located on Hwy. 36 near Owingsville, the site has a park with picnic tables and a playground.

**Cora Wilson Stewart Moonlight School** (606-783-2204), located on the Morehead State University campus, is dedicated to the superintendent of Rowan County schools who pioneered adult education in the United States. Because adults had to work during

daylight hours, she initiated schools on moonlit nights, so that people in eastern Kentucky, who were without electricity, could find their way to and from school. The school was built in 1910 and closed in 1963. It was restored by Morehead State University and moved to its present location in 1999. Group tours are available.

**C & O Passenger Train Depot** (606-784-6221), built in 1904, is one of the oldest buildings still standing in Morehead. It's also significant due to the role it played in the Rowan County War when "political tensions led to a three-year period of violence which resulted in some twenty deaths." The depot, which now houses the Morehead Tourism Commission and the Morehead/Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, is located on First Street.

**Rowan County Courthouse** (606-784-6221), located on Main Street, dates back to 1899 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Courthouse at Morehead was burned by guerrillas on March 21, 1864, the easternmost damages of the war. The building was burned again in 1880; lost, too, were all county records up to that point.

**Tater Knob Fire Tower** (606-784-6428), located within the Daniel Boone National Forest near Salt Lick, stands 35 feet tall and offers spectacular views of the area. The tower, built in 1934 and restored in 1993, is the only fire tower left in the forest and is listed on the National Historic Lookout Register.

**Clear Creek Iron Furnace** (859-745-3100), found along the Zilpo National Scenic Byway in the Daniel Boone National Forest, dates back to the 1800's, when America was in need of iron for everything from household pots to wheels for trains. The furnace—made of hand-cut limestone stacked 40 feet high—originally produced an average of three tons of iron a day, devouring half an acre of trees in the process. The Kentucky hillsides, rich in natural resources, not only provided the iron ore but also provided the necessary limestone and trees used in the iron making process.

**Bath County Court House** (606-674-2266), located on Main Street in Owingsville, was built in 1866 and restored to its original splendor in the 1990's.