



# Matt Gardner Homestead Newsletter

## Christmas Edition 2009

### Special events in our neighborhood:

Elkton Christmas Parade  
Dec. 5, 10:00 AM  
931-468-2506

Elkton Historical Society  
Log Cabin Christmas Tour  
Dec. 13, 1:00 - 5:00 PM  
931-468-2244 or  
931-468-2061

### Individual Highlights:

- Walk into History Page 2
- Folklife Festival Page 3
- Restoration Update Page 4

We send out a  
*Special Thanks*  
to the City of Elkton  
for their continued  
support of the MGHM  
and our events!



### Swinging, Still

Gardner Homestead

Artist captures a by-gone era at the Matt Gardner house. Read the story on page 2.

### A Message from the MGHM Foundation President

The year 2009 saw the MGHM Foundation hold our first annual Folklife Festival this past October. We were thrilled to get started on this and plan to have it as an annual event. This past April, we received our painted quilt block and were the first venue to exhibit it on the Southern Middle Tennessee Quilt Trail. Restoration and stabilization of the farmhouse back porch, dining room, and kitchen foundations were completed which allowed us, for the very first time, to open these areas to visitors. Tours of the museum during our Folklife Festival and the Elkton Historical Society's Walk into History Day allowed the seventh and eighth grade students of Elkton Elementary to get a visual lesson on how life was at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During 2009 several of our board members attended informative conferences and workshops. We designed informational rack cards for future partnerships and we started the process of interpreting the museum. All things considered, we had a good year.

Year 2010 will be more of a challenge for the museum due to the state of the economy. We had hoped to complete restoration and repair of the living room and bedroom floors and foundation, as well as the repair and restoration of the farmhouse roof. At this time, these projects and the museum grand opening will have to be placed on hold. So, the museum foundation will focus on smaller projects. These smaller projects would include restoring the smokehouse, outhouses, and the chicken coop. We had lots of questions about these buildings during the Walk into History. Restoration would give our younger visitors the opportunity to satisfy their curiosity of these buildings on their next visit to the museum. We hope this "detour" will peak interest in our project and encourage members and frequent donors to step up their support and to also encourage new benefactors to help in the continuing restoration of the farmstead.

In 2010 we look forward to our 2nd Folklife Festival. Also, plans are to bring back the MGHM chili auction in April as a fundraiser. We look forward to a dedication of two interpretive markers at the farmstead and the release of the book entitled *African Americans of Giles County Tennessee* by Arcadia Publishing. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will go toward continued restoration of the museum. In the spring of 2010, we look forward to Humanities Tennessee and the Elkton Historical Society's "We the People Project" to go online as an educational tour guide about the history and people of Elkton. These projects will offer ways for many people, especially children, to learn about the town of Elkton and all the history it has to offer. In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for your continued support, your creative ideas, and especially your friendship. We couldn't do this without you. So, on behalf of the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum Foundation, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Carla Jones, President



Oil painting by Christopher Greco entitled "Swinging, Still - Gardner Homestead"

Photo used with permission  
Christopher Greco

## Swinging, Still

While browsing the internet a couple of board members noticed an interesting link. Once they clicked on the link a picture came up of a single swing on a porch and they quickly realized to their surprise it was the swing on the porch at the Matt Gardner House. The picture is an oil painting by artist Christopher Greco titled *Swinging, Still - Gardner Homestead*. Chris, originally from Connecticut, attended Paier School of Art in Hamden, Connecticut. He started his career as a freelance illustrator in New York and later worked for Hallmark and many other companies as he traveled across the states using his talented skills as an artist. Besides painting, he has worked in film for many years. He

spent 10 years at Walt Disney Feature Animation where he worked on films such as Hunchback of Notre Dame, Mulan, and Lilo and Stitch just to name a few. He also worked with Sony where he worked on The Polar Express and Spiderman 2. Greco currently resides in Ohio but is working as a multi-media designer for Northrop-Grumman in Huntsville, Alabama. We are so pleased that Chris chose to do the Matt Gardner House as one of his "A New Painting Every Day" series. The oil painting sells for \$150.00 and can be purchased online through PayPal. To read the story as to the sequence of events on the day he painted the picture and to see more of his paintings please visit:

[www.christophergreco.blogspot.com](http://www.christophergreco.blogspot.com).

## A Walk into History at the Matt Gardner Homestead

Over the past several years the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum has participated in the Elkton Historical Society's annual Trails of Tears Volksmarch in October. On the Friday before the Volksmarch event the historical society guides their local 7th and 8th grade students on a *Walk into History*. This walk is a shorter version of the 10K Volksmarch route. In the past, students were given information and history about Matt Gardner (the house museum and farmstead) on a bus during inclement weather or from the front porch of the house on the farmstead. But thanks to the restoration efforts going on at the museum, on Friday October 23, for the very first time the students were able to go inside and actually see up close and first hand some of the history, heritage, and farming cultural of the museum. There was a lot of interest and many questions from the students. A few of the questions were about the age and structure of the house. There were many more about the artifacts lying around the farmstead. Tour guide, Carla Jones, great-great granddaughter of Matt Gardner, focused on African-American farming and education during the early nineteenth century at the farmstead and in the community.

Displayed throughout the house were pictures of some early African-American school teachers and students from classes circa 1918, 1924 and 1930. Also included were some early enrollment and attendance records of Holts Elementary. The students then moved to the outside where many of them wanted some interaction with the chicken coop, smokehouse, well house, and the horse barn, not to mention the outhouse. Due to the condition of those buildings, the students were told a "hands on" was not available at this time. But that did not stop the questions about all those buildings. All and all the children were very interested and enjoyed the experience. Many were hoping to write their *Walk into History* essays on Matt Gardner and the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum. We look forward to having the next 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students next year. We hope to tour the entire farmstead museum and have numerous interactions with the other facilities as well as some other hands on activities.



Learn more about Volksmarching at

[www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org)



Carla Jones talks to Elkton Elementary 8<sup>th</sup> graders about the Homestead's out buildings and the quilt trail.



Students are inside the Matt Gardner home for the first time learning how people lived during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Folklife Festival in Pictures

On Saturday October 24, 2009 the MGHM had its 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Folklife Festival at the farmstead museum. Even though it was a little chilly lots of friends came out. There was a fire going for candle making; we had basket weaving, wool looming, and knitting. Included in the day of fun was a grist mill and apple pressing demonstrations which yielded some good tasting apple cider and some fresh stone ground cornmeal which everyone could purchase. There was pocket doll making for the kids as well as a bee observatory. Visitors watched intently as Ben Hoksbergen, Redstone Arsenal archeologist, made arrowheads right before our eyes from stone and rocks. And our music for the day was provided by state fiddle champion, Maddie Denton. If you missed this year's event, you really missed out on a fun day for all. But you can always participate or visit us next year. See you in 2010 for the MHGM 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Folklife Festival.



## Thank You

... to all the businesses that supported the MGHM Folklife Day and Festival.

**Ardmore:** Ardmore Chapel Funeral Home, El Olmeca Mexican Restaurant, Whitt's Barbecue, McDonalds, Sonic, Subway, and Hardees. **Pulaski:** Richland Inn Hotel, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lili's Authentic Oriental Restaurant, Coca Cola Bottling Plant, Sun Drop Bottling Co., Bennett-May-Giles County Funeral Home, KFC, McDonalds, Taco Bell, Sonic, Hardees, Long John Silver's and Casa Blanca Mexican Restaurant.



... to the City of Elkton for clearing the brush around the house and providing trash receptacles.



... to Pastor Eddie Woodard and Sunrise Chapel for providing all the tables and chairs.



...and last but not least, to all our

## Volunteers!



Crisp air and fall colors provide a backdrop for the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum Folklife Festival



Anna Webster, Julie Webster, & Dottie Caldwell  
Spinners and Weavers



Bennie Birdsong talks about his Bee Observatory



Board Member Melinda Maes  
Makes Pocket Dolls



Tim Miller - Old Spencer Mill  
Burns, TN.  
Grinding Cornmeal



Darrell Beard / Tim Hobbs  
Bon Aqua, TN  
Making Fresh Apple Cider



Redstone Arsenal  
Archaeologist, Ben Hoksbergen  
Demonstrates Flint knapping



Maddie Denton, 2009 State  
Fiddler Champion & Her  
Parents Offer Up Some Music



Local Kids Test Their  
Clogging Skills

## Officers

Carla J. Jones, President  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Donielle R. Neal, Secretary  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Jewel D. Bailey, Chairman  
Indianapolis, Indiana

## Board Members

Gary D. Gardner, Owner-  
Operator  
Gardner's Lawn & Cleaning  
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Elkton, Tennessee

Malcomb Gardner, Consultant  
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Rev. Stephen E. Gardner, CEO  
Crown of Hope International  
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Temple of Praise Baptist Church  
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Interpreter  
Belle Meade Plantation  
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Retired, Giles County Schools  
Detroit, Michigan

Diana Steelman, Former Tourism  
Coordinator  
Giles County Tourism Foundation  
Pulaski, Tennessee

Karen Russell, Historian  
Elkton Historical Society  
Elkton, Tennessee

Carolyn S. Thompson, President  
Elkton Historical Society  
Elkton, Tennessee

Roosevelt Whitfield, City Council &  
Historian  
City of Elkton  
Elkton, Tennessee

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**Homestead Museum**  
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## Season's greetings from the Elkton Historical Society!



Local historian, George Newman, stands in the attic of the Brown-Gaultney Cabin near Elkton. This nearly 200 year old log cabin was the birthplace of one of Tennessee's former governors, John C. Brown. Brown was born here in 1825. It is one of five log cabins and homes on this year's Christmas tour sponsored by the Elkton Historical Society. Tour date is Dec. 13, from 1-5 PM. Call 931-468-2244 for more information. Find a driving map at [www.elktonhistory.net](http://www.elktonhistory.net) after Dec 1.

## Restoration Update - We're One Step Closer!

Miller Renovations of Burns, Tennessee continues to do the work of preserving, restoring, and repairing the house in preparation for opening it to the public on a full time basis. Out building restoration will begin in the spring of 2010. We are grateful for all the support we have received through state grants, corporate funding, individual memberships and donations over the past couple of years that has allowed us to make substantial progress in the restoration of the foundation at the museum making it safe for our visitors. This year we completed flooring repair that included the back porch and breezeway as well as the kitchen and dining areas of the house. The only part of the foundation left to repair is the main house, which we hope to have done soon, then it is on to restoring the museum's roof. In the past, because of the unsafe foundation conditions at the museum, it has been impossible for many events and tours to take place inside such as the Walk into History tour of the museum, but this was not the case this year. Folks were finally allowed inside all the downstairs rooms.

Welcome to New  
Member:  
Victoria Boyette  
Louisville, KY

Thank You to Member  
John Vassar (San Diego,  
CA) who has become a  
MGHM

Silver Patron



Back porch before restoration



The new cedar porch looks great!

To make a tax deductible donation...visit [www.mattgardnerhomestead.com](http://www.mattgardnerhomestead.com)