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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SMITHSONIAN COMING TO COWAN March 10 through April 21, 2012

Franklin County History Bullets for “The Way We Worked” an exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution and Humanities Tennessee council, based on photographs from the National Archives.

Sally Hubbard gathered all information from issues of the *Franklin County Historical Review* (FCHR) unless otherwise noted.

In 1851 a huge mill on the Elk River at **Estill Springs** manufactured products from cotton, wool, hemp, and silk. The mill community included houses for workers and was called Alisonia Springs. The town name was changed to Estill Springs in 1854 and the first post office opened in 1860. The first public school opened in 1885. Mineral springs containing sulphur and chalybeate waters inspired spas and summer resorts; the largest of four hotels housed 150 visitors who came by train from Nashville and Memphis. Boating, tennis, riding, and dancing entertained summer guests prior to the automobile era. In 1890 the largest grain mill south of the Ohio River employed 75 men and could produce 2,500 barrels of flour per day. The mill burned in 1912 and Tims Ford Lake now covers the site.

The first hydroelectric plant in Tennessee was built on the Elk River in 1901. The General Electric dynamo had a capacity of 100 kilowatts and furnished current for street lighting in the Winchester Taxing District. (Remnants of the plant, including the water gates, are visible from Highway 41A at Tims Ford Lake.) The Estill Springs Sand and Gravel Company employed local workers in the 1930s and 1940s, and produced concrete for Highway 41-A and Camp Forrest. New residents arrived in 1950 when Arnold Engineering Development Center was built on the Camp Forrest site. Tyson Foods Mill is a major employer today. (FCHR, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1987)

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An antebellum slave of the Coover/Townsend families called **Doc Townsend** went to Huntsville in 1864 when federal troops arrived to enlist and be recognized as a free citizen. After the Civil War he was educated as a minister and helped establish the Mount Zion Baptist Church. Townsend identified himself primarily as a school teacher; he taught sometimes as the only teacher of the Winchester Elementary School and undertook the raising of funds to erect a six-classroom school for Blacks, Townsend High School. Upon his death at age 82, having been married for 53 years, he was lauded for his long career of “usefulness, devotion, and service to his family, church, community, state, and country.” (FCHR, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1986)

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**Arthur Colyar** was counsel for McGhee and Company, the Winchester firm that built the railroad from Cowan to Tracy City, 1852 to 1858. After the War Colyar became sole owner of the Sewanee Mining Company and became its president in 1866 when it was named the Tennessee Coal and Railroad Company. He is credited with driving Nashville’s carpetbagger mayor, August Alden, out of Tennessee; his own attempt to become governor was not successful.

His sister **Martha Colyar** was a proud graduate of the Winchester Female Academy. The word “obey” was omitted from her vows when she married Reed Roseboro in 1857, and she made sure she was known as Martha Colyar Roseboro rather than Mrs. Reed Roseboro. An indomitable emancipationist, she radicalized her husband’s Presbyterian sermons and insisted on a move to Missouri, where her husband enlisted as a Union chaplain (and was disowned by his family). While visiting her brother in Cowan, she condemned his hiring convict labor for his mines, but she recorded an excited ride up Sewanee Mountain in a passenger car “clinging to a long empty coal train.” Martha returned to Franklin County in 1857 and became principal of a Shelbyville school. Her efforts to integrate Blacks into the school system created such turmoil that she returned to Missouri in 1869.

Martha’s daughter **Viola Roseboro** attended Fairmount College\* in then Moffat, later Moffat Station, later Mont Eagle, now Monteagle. An actress, freelance writer, newspaper columnist, and fiction editor for McClure’s and Collier’s, she mentored the careers of O. Henry, Booth Tarkington, Willa Cather, Jack London among others, and had homes in New York and Florence, Italy. Her fiction features wartime Strathboro (Winchester) and outsiders in Southern mountain towns; one story depicts the rivalry between Decherd and Winchester. (FCHR, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1986) *\*The former campus of Fairmount College is known today as DuBose Conference Center.*

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For more information call Pat Underwood at 931-962-2356 or check the website at [www.Smithsonian.CowanRailroadMuseum.org](http://www.Smithsonian.CowanRailroadMuseum.org)