

Quiz 1: Folk Art Center, Rowan County Exhibit

The Rowan County Exhibit at the Folk Art Center was very descriptive and well-organized. Photographs aptly displayed the time periods. I especially felt moved by the mysterious look of Morehead in David Bartlett's silver gelatin prints. The exhibit was a learning experience for me. It included a lot of facts that I previously was unaware of concerning Rowan County's history and culture. This county has a rich and unique history.

Throughout its history, the people of Rowan County have shown motivation and courage. Perhaps most conspicuously, they have had to adjust to abruptly changing landscapes caused by flooding. An example of this within the exhibit is the flood of 1939 when twenty-five Rowan County citizens lost their lives. A depressing fact of the aftermath of the flood is that nearly fifty thousand people traveled to Morehead just to tour the tragic ruins of the town. These tourists put a serious strain on the clean-up efforts of the townspeople. They should have been helping. Nowadays, when people go to an area that has been destroyed by a natural disaster they help the citizens clean-up and rebuild.

A popular American legend concerning Rowan County was high illiteracy. The Moonlight Schools in the area targeted this condition by educating rural adults on moonlit nights. The Morehead Normal School educated an even greater number of people in the area. No matter what Americans elsewhere thought about eastern Kentucky, the fact is that most people were trying to increase education in their region.

As portrayed in the exhibit, Rowan County women were mothers of large families so that there would be more help on the farms. Claire Louise Caudill, a female doctor, opened her office in 1943 to serve the Morehead community. She was highly influential in the growth of Morehead's healthcare. The present day St. Claire Regional Medical Center is named in honor of her crucial career during a time when women were not socially accepted as doctors. Women were also students and teachers at the one room schoolhouses in Rowan County and in the Morehead Normal School (established 1887).

Rowan County men were fathers of large families. Many owned farms and some operated small businesses on Main Street. However, the saloons built to accommodate tourists traveling through on the railroad introduced violence to the small town. Political elections brought violence and booze that sparked a three-year feud between two Rowan County families; this feud finally ended in the so-called "Rowan County War." Several decades later, a man moved to Morehead to open a film projector factory. He succeeded in 1913. The Maggard-Bradley Cosmograph Company was one of Morehead's first factories and it furthered opportunities for employment in the area.

In the Rowan County exhibit, the issue of race appeared virtually nonexistent. The exhibit also did not explain why women and men held the roles they did during certain time periods. I feel sure that Dr. Clair Louise Caudill had to go through many hardships since she was the first female doctor in Morehead. Her struggles and those of other influential women in Morehead were not presented in the exhibit.

Present-day Rowan County has changed vastly in comparison to its past. Men and women are more equal. Family size tends to be much smaller. Farming is not as common for people living in the county seat. The county seat is no longer named Triplett. The Morehead and North Fork Railroad Company is gone and a modern bypass now exists in its place. None of the historic and unique buildings that were on Main Street remain. Today Rowan County remains a beautiful area intertwined by streams and mountains. Flooding continues to cause problems in the area. The unemployment rate for the county is still low due to the continuation of the logging industry. The college is still open and serves the surrounding community. All in all, Morehead is still a small, friendly, and productive community.

Some questions that I have from viewing the Rowan County exhibit concern details about the damming of the Licking River and career women's struggles. For example, why did the exhibit leave out details about what Dr. Caudill underwent to practice medicine in the rural county?

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What were some of Dr. Caudill's struggles? How did she deal with any hardships that she encountered? Also, what exactly happened to the small communities that were flooded with the creation of the dam? What were some of the details of the farmers' fight against the building of the Cave Run Lake Dam? Other than tourism, what have been the benefits of the Dam? Finally, how has the Daniel Boone National Forest influenced the community?