

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

Linda Caldwell, Executive Director
Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association
phone: (423) 263-7232
fax: (423) 263-1670
email: lcaldwell@tennesseehill.com
www.tennesseehill.com

Unicoi Turnpike Trail - Exploring an Ancient Path

Etowah, TN - Feb 13, 2007

Etowah, TN - February 2, 2007 - The path now known as the Unicoi Turnpike Trail predates written history. It has been a major corridor for human travel for thousands of years and was the gateway for early settlers into the frontier of eastern Tennessee. Today, thanks to a free trail guide and website offered by the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association, the Historic Unicoi Turnpike Trail is easy to explore.

The trail, which runs between Vonore, Tennessee and Murphy, North Carolina, follows an ancient trade path that once connected the Overhill Cherokee Towns along the Little Tennessee and Tellico rivers in eastern Tennessee to the coastal ports in Georgia and South Carolina. Most of the trail can be easily explored by automobile. A restored section of original roadbed, that is located in the Cherokee national Forest, is open to the public for hiking.

The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association produced a printed trail guide and an online guide to help people explore the trail. Both guides include a brief history of the Unicoi Turnpike Trail, information about suggested stops along the way, and a map with the trail and significant sites marked. The printed guide is free of charge and available at museums and visitor centers along the trail. A copy can also be obtained by contacting the Tennessee Overhill office at 423-263-7232, 877-510-5767, or PO Box 143, Etowah, TN 37331.

People can explore the Unicoi Turnpike Trail virtually at www.tennesseehill.com. Information, descriptions of significant sites, and maps of the trail can be found at the "Heritage Trails" section of the website.

Bill Akins, retired Professor of History at Tennessee Wesleyan College, conducted the historical research for the guides. Ralph DeWitt, a McMinn County artist, created the hand drawn illustrations. The online guide was designed by Shyam Nunley, Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association, and Thepatchwerks website designs.

Humanities Tennessee, East Tennessee Foundation, and USDA Rural Development provided financial support for the printed and online guides.

In 2000 the Unicoi Turnpike Trail was declared one of sixteen National Millennium Flagship Trails. Since then, several organizations and government agencies have worked together to develop and interpret the Unicoi Turnpike Trail for the public. Dr. Brett Riggs, Research Archeologist for the University of North Carolina said, “Those who follow this trail will be following the footsteps of thousands of people who traveled this path for thousands of years.”

###

Photos upon request