

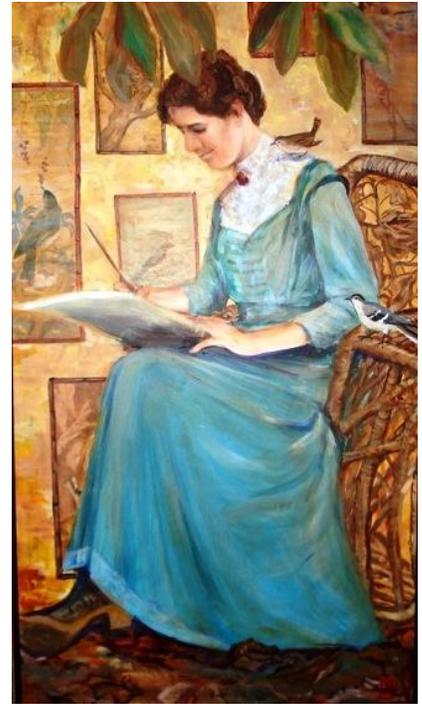
Emma Bell Miles Symposium on Southern Appalachian Culture & Nature

MEDIA RELEASE

To arrange interviews, photos, or for further information, please contact:

Steven Cox
UTC Lupton Library Special Collections
423.425.2186
Steven-Cox@utc.edu

Complete schedule: www.lib.utc.edu/emmabellmiles.
Historical photos and images from her paintings and drawings are also available to the media for reprint.



Emma Bell Miles Symposium Highlights Local Mountain Culture and Habitat *Two-day Community Event Presented at UTC Sept. 9 & 10*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 22, 2011. Chattanooga, Tennessee. In September, a diverse audience, including artists, naturalists, and scholars from across the region and beyond will gather to explore the life and work of Emma Bell Miles, a pioneering ethnographer of Southern Appalachian culture.

The Second Annual Emma Bell Miles Symposium on Southern Appalachian Culture & Nature will be held Sept. 9 and 10, 2011, at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and will include presenters from Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, as well as the Czech Republic and the Ukraine. The interdisciplinary event will be infused with a variety of musical performances, exhibits, local history tours that relate to Miles' life, and receptions featuring local food.

The UTC Department of English and the Lupton Library are hosting the event.

Emma Bell Miles (1879-1919) was a writer, painter, and naturalist who lived, for most of her life, on Walden's Ridge and in Chattanooga. The UTC Lupton Library Special Collections house her journals, drawings, photographs and other memorabilia. Miles published numerous short

stories, poems, and newspaper columns as well as three books, which she also illustrated: *The Spirit of the Mountains*, *Strains from a Dulcimore*, and *Our Southern Birds*.

“Miles is recognized by scholars for her work in recording and interpreting the changing Southern Appalachian culture of her time,” said **Verbie Prevost**, UTC English Professor and a member of the symposium committee. “Her journals, which record her more private familial experiences and ongoing struggles with poverty, serve as rare source documents for those engaged in sociological, historical or feminist studies.”

Steven Cox is the head of the Special Collections of the Lupton Library that houses two donated collections of Emma Bell Miles’ material, including her handwritten journals, letters, and artwork. Cox has been working the past few years transcribing, editing, and annotating her unpublished journals for publication, so that there is further access for research, education, but also for the fascinating gift they are to any reader. “Emma Bell Miles wrote these journals during the most trying times of her life, through desperate living conditions, the death of her youngest son, the hand-to-mouth existence the family experienced, and finally the tuberculosis that would claim her life,” said Cox. “Yet, she always was cognizant of the nature around her, and she worked diligently in documenting it. The journals are beautifully written, haunting, yet sometimes dark. They are powerful original source documents that not only speak to her individual life, but open a window to the complexity of roles and relationships within many families of her time. It may be an understatement to say that she was ahead of her time.”

Katerina Prajznerova, who teaches American literature at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, regularly includes Miles in her courses, has translated excerpts from Miles’ writings for an anthology, and has published an article on *The Spirit of the Mountains*. She serves as a member of the symposium committee. “I am delighted this has become a community event that will bring together teachers, artists, naturalists and local admirers of Miles,” said Prajznerova. “We hope to honor Miles’ work and place it into a broader context.”

The symposium is a unique opportunity to experience guided tours of the Emma Bell Miles sites in the Chattanooga area. Miles’ biographer **Kay Baker Gaston** will guide the tour on Signal Mountain which includes Signal Point, where Miles taught painting classes on the bluff overlooking the Tennessee River Gorge, and the Little Brown Church, where she gave poetry readings for the community. Gaston will also give a presentation, “Artistic Lives: Emma Bell Miles and Her Contemporaries,” during the opening panel.

“In many ways the symposium has become a reunion for many people who have long shared an admiration of Emma and who have helped preserve her legacy,” said **Laurie Perry Vaughn**, a local poet who will host the receptions in Fort Wood featuring locally grown and crated foods. On Saturday, Vaughn will read from her new chapbook, “Feathers of a Black-Tipped Brush.”

“Like many, I have found her personal story as compelling as her documentary of the region. She struggled to help her husband provide for their family as a writer and painter, grieved her son’s death and suffered the agony of tuberculosis which took her life at age 39. In spite of that, she left us an amazing quilt of stories, poems, paintings and observations of nature. I am glad she was able to see her work published before her passing. Her narrative of perseverance continues to inspire.”

Highlights of the Symposium include:

- **Pre-symposium film: “Green Fire: The Life of Aldo Leopold”** produced by the Aldo Leopold Foundation. The film will be presented at the Benwood Foundation Gaining Ground initiative offices off Main Street at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8. A \$5 donation is suggested. **Jim Pfitzer** will moderate a discussion of the film following the showing.
- Friday keynote address by **Grace Toney Edwards**, Professor Emeritus of Appalachian Studies and English at Radford University, and former Director and current Research Faculty Associate at the Appalachian Regional Studies Center. Edwards first “met” Emma Bell Miles in 1975 upon reading the facsimile edition of *The Spirit of the Mountains* as a doctoral student at the University of Virginia. Miles became the subject of Edwards’ Ph.D. dissertation, *Emma Bell Miles: Appalachian Author, Artist, and Interpreter of Folk Culture*.
- Saturday keynote address by **Elizabeth Engelhardt**, Associate Professor, Department of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin, will discuss Southern Foodways: “Feeding the Appalachian Family.” She is the author of *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature* and the editor of the first anthology in the field of Appalachian Women’s Studies, *Beyond Hill and Hollow*.
- Guided tours of local sites depicted in Emma’s books and journals both Friday and Saturday. On Friday Miles’ biographer **Kay Baker Gaston** and local historian **Karen Stone** will highlight the Signal Mountain sites. On Saturday, Southern Appalachian scholars **Grace Toney Edwards**, from Virginia, and **Katerina Prajznerova**, from the Czech Republic, will explore Miles’ life experiences in the downtown Chattanooga area.
- Music performances by **Matt Evans** and friends from the **Folk School of Chattanooga**, dulcimer player **Butch Ross**, vocalist **Hayle Graham**, singer/songwriter **Kathy Veasey** with guitarist **John Rawlston**, singer/guitar player **Pattee Wilbanks**, and traditional ballad singers **Laura Candler**, **Elspeth Schulze** and **Stephanie Downer Brewer**.
- A performance from “Mildred Haun’s *Cocke County Ballads and Songs: A Mountaineer Writes from Within the Tradition*” featuring **Viki Dasher Rouse**, Educator, Walters State Community College, Morristown, Tenn.; **Katie Hoffman**, Educator, Virginia

Commonwealth University, Richmond, Va.; and **Roy Andrade**, Educator, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn.

- Poetry readings by **Peggy Douglas** and **Laurie Perry Vaughen**, both of Chattanooga.
- Creative nonfiction from **Catherine Meeks**, and stories from **Jim Pfitzer**, both of Chattanooga.
- Early morning birding event led by naturalists **Ken Dubke** and **Bob Fulcher** at the Tennessee Riverpark's Amnicola Marsh area on Saturday.
- **Wes Berry**, from Western Kentucky University, will talk about Appalachian literature as a change agent to engage students and communities in the contemporary issues of land conservation, water quality and mining/industrial practices that continue to challenge the region.
- Visual art exhibit by **Betsy Kendrick Coogler** of Asheville, NC. (and formerly of Chattanooga) and a panel presentation featuring the art of Anne Davis of Signal Mountain.
- Exhibit featuring Emma Bell Miles items from the **Special Collections of the Lupton Library** at the University Center.
- The first public display of handmade quilts by the late **Lorna Perry**, (1927-1998) formerly of Chattanooga, whose work has been documented by the Smithsonian Institution.
- Evening receptions at Fortwood featuring a sample of local foods from **Link 41, Sequatchie Cove Creamery, Niedlov's Breadworks** and **Crabtree Farms**.

A complete schedule for the symposium is located at www.lib.utc.edu/emmabellmiles.

Pre-registration is appreciated. See the website for a registration form and other logistics on tours, lunch, parking and hotel accommodations.

The Emma Bell Miles Symposium planning committee includes: **Steven Cox, Anne Davis, Margha Davis, Catherine Meeks, Katerina Prajznerova, Verbie Prevost, Stephanie Todd, and Laurie Perry Vaughen.**

For further information, contact Steven Cox, head of Special Collections at the UTC Lupton Library: 423.425.2186, steven-cox@utc.edu.