



THE EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM of EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY

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ROCK OF AGES

East Tennessee's Marble Industry

New feature exhibition opening at the Museum of East Tennessee History

WHAT: *Rock of Ages: East Tennessee's Marble Industry*, a new feature exhibition at the Museum of East Tennessee History

DATE: Open November 19, 2016—May 14, 2017
Special Public Opening: Friday,
November 19, from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION: East Tennessee History Center
601 S. Gay Street
Knoxville, TN 37902

(Knoxville, TN) East Tennessee marble is prized the world over. *Rock of Ages: East Tennessee's Marble Industry*, a new exhibition by the East Tennessee Historical Society, offers a first-time look into the industry that launched the rock's fame and crowned Knoxville as the Marble City. The exhibition will open to the public on Saturday, November 19, at the Museum of East Tennessee History, with a special opening reception on Friday, November 18.



The marble industry was once an important sector of East Tennessee's economy. By the mid-1850s, East Tennessee marble from Knox County had been chosen for the interiors of the

Tennessee State Capitol and marble from Hawkins County was being installed inside the new House and Senate wings of the United States Capitol. In the decades that followed, East Tennessee's varicolored marble was sought by architects and patrons for the interiors of a variety of public buildings: state capitol buildings, courthouses, city halls. Tennessee marble would soon also be ordered for high traffic railroad terminal flooring across the United States and Canada.

In the 1870s, with the example of Knoxville's handsome new Custom House, the marble became known for its strength and durability as an exterior stone. The Custom House marble was extracted from a quarry in the Forks of the River district, near the confluence of the French Broad and Holston Rivers. By 1873, this quarry was being operated by the Knoxville Marble Company, one of East Tennessee's first modern marble businesses. Others were soon to follow on



both sides of the Tennessee River, the Crescent Marble Company in the Boyd's Bridge area provided marble for the Memphis Custom House (completed 1885) and the Ross and Mead Marble quarries, developed by John M. Ross in the Island Home section furnished marble for two exemplary museum buildings: the Morgan Library (1906) and the National Gallery of Art (1941). While the Mead quarry pit is now filled with water, the integrity of the Ross quarry has been preserved. Both quarries are situated in Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, within the Ijams Nature Center. What remains of the industrial landscape includes a rock wall created from marble waste blocks, two intact pits that demonstrate bench quarrying techniques, historic road traces and railroad berms, scattered piles and stacks of marble blocks, and the location of the former railroad bed.

Along this same railroad line, about 4 miles south in the Vestal neighborhood, is the Candoro Marble Company's office and mill buildings. Candoro, founded in 1914, housed a marble mill, finishing plant, and shipping office for the John J. Craig Companies, which had quarries in both Knox and Blount counties. The company office building, a Beaux Arts masterpiece designed by Knoxville architect Charles Barber in 1923, is a fine example of exterior use of light pink marble. The interior walls and floors served as a showroom for the types and finishes of marble offered by the company.

Reminders of the once prominent Tennessee marble industry can be seen today, in late 19th, early 20th century buildings on Gay Street and other corners of downtown, in building facades, steps and entranceways, and interior lobbies. The Knoxville Post Office and Federal Building on Main Street is a particularly fine example dating from the 1930s. And Knoxville, a city that has won national recognition for historic preservation, continues to embrace its marble heritage in modern buildings. Notice how seamlessly the new three-story East Tennessee History Center adjoins the original Custom House and how the exterior marble of the contemporary Knoxville Museum of Art brings the building's formal geometry to life.

The exhibition includes more than two dozen artifacts and numerous photographs and illustrations representative of Tennessee's unique marble story. Some feature items include a

footed marble dish, c. 1861, owned by John Hasson (1823-1901), a New Yorker who was involved in the Tennessee marble industry by 1857, when he founded the Hasson Marble Quarry; a mid-19th century East Tennessee biscuit table with Tennessee marble slab inset and yellow pine frame; and a beautifully carved “Head of David” by master carver Albert Milani (1892-1977), who spent 40 years at Candoro Marble Company, where he was foreman/head of the cutting department. The bust, crafted for his own pleasure, was nationally acclaimed by art critics.



The public opening of the exhibition begins at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, November 18, with light refreshments and remarks. Following the exhibition opening will be a special showing of “Quarry Project—Tennessee,” an exterior projection by artists Kate Katomski and Judd Mulkerin at 7:00 p.m. at the Knoxville Museum of Art.

The exhibition by the East Tennessee Historical Society with guest curator Susan Knowles is made possible through a collaboration with the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation and is sponsored by [Pilot Flying J](#) with support by East Tennessee PBS, TDS Exhibits, and the Tennessee Marble Company. The exhibit is on view at the Museum of East Tennessee History through May 14, 2017.

The Museum of East Tennessee History is open 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Saturday; and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sunday. Museum admission is \$5.00 for adults, \$4.00 for seniors, and FREE for children under 16. Each Sunday admission is FREE to all and ETHS members always receive FREE admission. The Museum is located in the East Tennessee History Center, 601 South Gay Street, Knoxville, TN 37901. For more information about the exhibition, scheduling a school tour, or visiting the museum, call (865) 215-8824, email eths@eastTNhistory.org, or visit www.easttnhistory.org.

About East Tennessee Historical Society

Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society is widely acknowledged as one of the most active history organizations in the state and enjoys a national reputation for excellence in programming and education. For 182 years the East Tennessee Historical Society has been helping East Tennesseans hold on to our unique heritage—recording the events, collecting the artifacts, and saving the stories that comprise the history we all share.

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