



Foxfire

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The Nicholson Cabin Gateway Completed

and Thank You to the Eighth-Grade Students of Tallulah Falls School

If you've been in the North Georgia area recently, and happened to venture up Black Rock Mountain Parkway in Mountain City, you might have noticed a graded and graveled patch of ground on the south side of the road, just after turning off of Highway 441 in Mountain City. Gradually, over the last year, the walls of a small log structure were stacked together near the back of the lot. The walls grew a little taller, a split-rail fence sprung up near the road, and loft floor joists capped the log walls. Then, in late spring, nearing summer, pole rafters stretched for the sky above the little cabin, and another month saw the rusty tin roof appear. Oh yes, at some point during this time, a sign was erected near the road's edge, proclaiming simply, "Foxfire."

The Nicholson Cabin is a late-1800s log outbuilding that served as a corn crib and a wagon shed on the Nicholson property, located in the eastern reaches of Rabun County, along GA Highway 28 near the Chattooga River. The large tract of land and assorted structures making up the Nicholson property were donated to the U.S. Forest Service, who contacted Foxfire in an effort to find a home for some of the buildings. With well over 20 log cabins already on their property, Foxfire elected only to take the smaller of the two log structures on the property. The corn crib was photographed and documented, and each piece of the cabin was tagged in preparation for dismantling and moving. As is always Foxfire's tradition, students were involved as often as possible with the project. A visiting group of students from the North Carolina Outward Bound School donated a grueling day's labor in the summer of 2002 to the final disassembly of the cabin. Once moved to Mountain City, the plan was for the cabin to become a visitor station for Foxfire, housing signage, brochures, and a few simple displays. To this end, reconstruction of

the cabin began in the yard of Foxfire's former office building and gift shop on Highway 441.

In the fall of 2002, Killeen Jensen and Bob Loder of Tallulah Falls School were just beginning a working partnership with Foxfire to bring their middle-school students to Mountain City for some unique, Foxfire-style hands-on learning. Over two school years, Bob and Killeen's students worked to reassemble the walls in between the other learning experiences that only Foxfire could provide, but the project was halted when Foxfire made the decision to sell its highway frontage and move



Foxfire's new "gateway" visitor station on Black Rock Mountain Parkway is now home to the Nicholson Cabin. The gateway will have signs, brochures, and maps to give Black Rock Mountain travelers basic information about Foxfire and mostly importantly—how to get there.

all operations back up Black Rock Mountain to the original Museum property. In 2004, the cabin was taken back apart to be stored until a new site for it could be found.

In 2006, a small lot on the side of Black Rock Mountain Parkway was cleared and prepared, with enough parking room for several cars and a pull-through driveway to accommodate the occasional pull-behind camper or motor home. Last fall, a new group of Tallulah Falls School eighth-graders began assembling the Nicholson Cabin in its new home. Working from stacked-rock foundation pillars, the students reassembled all but the top rows of the cabin walls by hand, reading numbered tags on the logs to properly place each log in its original location in the structure. The students also helped prepare and place a small number of replacement logs for a few that were too badly deteriorated to use. The next part of work involved replacing the crib and loft flooring, using hammers and nails to fasten down original planking.

The most labor-intensive part of the cabin work was replacing the roof structure, which was necessary due to poor condition and/or inadequate strength of many of the original rafters. Using sawhorses and drawknives, the industrious students skinned the bark from about two dozen poplar poles averaging six inches in diameter and twelve feet in length. The bark skinning took place over several of their monthly visits.

On their final visit before the school year ended, each student was given the opportunity to use a bow saw and miter box to cut the angled end for the top, peak end of each rafter, and to use a hammer and a chisel to carve the "bird's mouth" notch for positioning the lower end of the rafter. Each student then progressed to the top of the ladder to nail the lower end of their rafter in place, while another student assisted them by nailing the top of the rafter to the roof peak.

Aside from all the work on the cabin itself, these hardy students also spent time during several visits working on the landscaping of the gateway site. On almost every visit, a few students opted to work with sledgehammers and wedges to split locust logs into fence rails, finishing up by hand-stacking the attractive fence along the roadside edge of the site. Later spring visits also included spreading mulch around the cabin, removing silt fencing, raking the lot edges and planting grass seed, and finally



The Nicholson Cabin, shown here in its original location near the Chattooga River, is a late-1800s log outbuilding that was used most notably as a corn crib and a wagon shed. When its original home was donated to the U.S. Forest Service, they contacted Foxfire to see if any of the old homeplace's buildings might find a new home in Mountain City.





Above are students performing each part of the process of making and installing a rafter on the Nicholson Cabin: skinning bark from the poplar logs, sawing the angled top end, notching the lower end, and nailing bottom and top ends in place on the cabin.

separating and planting a couple hundred day lily plants for summer color and added erosion control around the parking area.

Situated to be accessible to travelers headed up or down Black Rock Mountain, the Nicholson Cabin will finally fulfill its new role as a “gateway” information site to direct visitors to the Foxfire Museum and Heritage Center (accessible from the Parkway by following the brown “Foxfire” signs). Foxfire would like to thank everyone who has taken part in this venture: Dave Jensen and the U.S. Forest Service for donating the cabin; the North Carolina Outward Bound School and their students for their work removing the cabin from its original location; the volunteers who helped prepare the gateway site; Bob Loder, Killeen Jensen, and Tallulah Falls School for their continued working partnership with Foxfire; and especially the 2002-2003 seventh-grade and the 2006-2007 eighth-grade classes of Tallulah Falls School for their hard work in reassembling the cabin and landscaping the gateway site.

Thank you all for helping make Foxfire a little easier to see and to find!



Foxfire would like to extend sincere thanks to teachers Killeen Jensen and Bob Loder, and students Matilda Adu, Matt Beaty, Lauren Browning, Mary Claire Conwell, Kaylie Donaldson, Hannah Ellis, Claire Fisher, Chris Jeboda, Malcolm Jones, Lina Kim, Mo Se Kim, So Jin Lee, Trevor Long, Samantha Marchetti, Calvin Oh, Macey Singleton, and Hayden Taylor.