

Producers talk Crockett tourism

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Todd Morgan, director of the Crossroads Downtown Partnership, Sally Baker, site director of the Crockett Tavern Museum, Gary Foreman and Carolyn Raine-Foreman, Native Sun Productions and Lila Wilson, director of tourism for the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce, met Wednesday in downtown Morristown to tour its historic architecture and talk about the Foremans' potential work with Morristown on several projects.

Twin passions for downtown revitalization and Davy Crockett history brought husband wife team Gary Foreman and Carolyn Raine-Foreman, independent producers who have created documentaries for the History Channel, to downtown Morristown Wednesday.

Raine-Foreman explained that they have several projects in the works that involve Morristown, including the creation of the Crockett Heritage Trail and other potential tie-ins their production company, Native Sun Productions could offer toward Morristown's downtown revitalization.

The pair is working with the History Channel and the state of Tennessee on the Crockett Heritage Trail, which would connect Crockett historical sites in Tennessee in a trail that would lead tourists from one to the next.

Three sites are already on board, Raine-Foreman said, Morristown's Crockett Tavern Museum, the Davy Crockett birthplace and the East Tennessee Historical Society museum in Knoxville. Others have shown interest. She said there are at least 20 Crockett sites in Tennessee, but likely more.

She wants them all to be connected. If the interest exists, they're also hoping to connect with Crockett sites in other states, trailing his journey from Washington D.C. to the Alamo. They're focusing on Tennessee first, however, since that's the location of the bulk of the sites.

Raine-Foreman said that, with the permission of the History Channel, they'll be re-editing their award winning documentary, Boone & Crockett: The Hunter-Heroes, made for the History Channel. They plan to take the Crockett portion of the two hour program and insert segments on each of the locations on the trail, highlighting the Crockett attractions as they apply to specific portions of the documentary.

As they step into the beginning stages of the project, the Foremans came to Morristown first because of connections they already have in the area. Raine-Foreman said they are friends with Sally Baker, site director for the Crockett Tavern Museum.

They've also spent time in the area with members of the Crockett family when they visited Morristown. So they're familiar with the city and what it has to offer.

Foreman explained his love for Davy Crockett history, dating back to his childhood when he saw Disney's Fess Parker series on Davy Crockett, he fell in love with the hero's story, and history in general.

"I never let go of the Crockett story," he said.

Their project promoting Crockett, and the places that have preserved his history, is intended to introduce a new character to the world, Raine-Foreman said, albeit one that is already known to the public.

"We see this as being a huge thing," she said.

She added that they have a good relationship with representatives from the History Channel, who were excited about the project.

They "have a tremendous historical outreach," Raine-Foreman said of the television icon.

"It is always exciting when people from out of town recognize ... the value of the history and heritage of our community," said Lila Wilson, director of tourism with the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce.

She explained that heritage tourism is an important part of the community and said the additional publicity from the trail would be helpful.

"It will be great for tourism," she said.

Crockett's story is important on a national level, as well as a local one and "to embrace that and build upon that ... will get a lot of folks excited," she said.

With the broad vision the couple has for the trail, Wilson said Morristown's place in the process means a lot.

"For Morristown to be on that map is a really big deal," she said.

That's the first project moving forward, she said, but "from there, the sky's the limit."

The pair talked to local officials, about things their company could do to tie together other parts of downtown with the Crockett heritage, as well as the downtown's own revitalization efforts and other parts of its heritage.

Todd Morgan, director of the Crossroads Downtown Partnership, enjoyed seeing their enthusiasm and broad vision.

"What impressed me so much is how excited they were about Morristown," he said.

The vision they presented of what can be done to celebrate Crockett looked at the whole town and how it can be a leader in those efforts is a good one, Morgan said.

“We absolutely love what you are doing,” Raine-Foreman said. “Downtown is the heart that can’t go away.”

She said the Wednesday meetings were just early brainstorming sessions, with no official decisions made, but that officials seemed interested in talking further about what the Foremans can do to be involved downtown.

-By Bethany Brown, Tribune Staff Writer