

After the Civil War, prisons in the South overflowed. Southern states enacted the "convict lease system" which turned prisoners from liabilities into assets by leasing them to work in mines, plantations, and railroads. There were only three ways out of the convict labor system: escape, self-mutilation, or death.

In 1877, business owners and politicians started using convict laborers to replace striking mine workers to crush labor unrest. Prison and labor reform movements of the time saw no end in sight for this cruel institution.

Then, free miners from Coal Creek found a solution by going to war with the State of Tennessee from 1891 to 1892. Tennessee ended its convict lease system and the rest of the South soon followed suit.

Many of the miners who survived the Coal Creek War, died in mine disasters at the Fraterville Mine in 1902 and the Cross Mountain Mine in 1911. These disasters, which killed 300 men and boys in Coal Creek, helped raise public awareness of the dangers of mining. Safety reforms, brought about in response to these disasters and others, have helped save thousands of lives in

mines throughout this country.

Relive the history and explore the scenic mountains and streams of Coal Creek by traveling the new Motor Discovery Trail. The trail is free, provided by efforts of the Boy Scouts of America, the American Society of Civil Engineers, Trout Unlimited, the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation, local residents, and students.



For more information about the Coal Creek Area, contact



**COAL CREEK
MINERS MUSEUM**
865-340-3269

www.coalcreekminersmuseum.com



865-457-4542

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Motor Discovery Trail

Oh God for one more breath
Remember me as long as you live



The History of
Coal Creek
Tennessee

★ **Coal Creek Miners Museum.** The museum is the starting point of the trail because it tell the story of the Coal Creek War, the Fraterville Mine Disaster, the Cross Mountain Mine Disaster and the social and cultural effects that mining coal had on East Tennessee.

A: Fraterville Miners' Circle in Leach Cemetery. Eighty-nine of the 216 miners who perished in the Fraterville Mine Disaster of 1902 are buried in concentric circles around an obelisk in view of Vowell Mountain to the west. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. Dozens of other Fraterville miners are buried in Longfield Cemetery and Wilson Cemetery.

B: Shoot-Out at Coal Creek Train Depot. After a strike by miners in Fraterville, mine owners recruited replacement workers from St. Louis and other locations to move to Coal Creek. Firecrackers set off by a group of boys started a shoot-out that ended with nine men wounded and four dead in 1904.

C: The Wye. Named after the River Wye in Wales by Welsh miners, Coal Creek flows through this gap in Walden Ridge. Walden Ridge marks the eastern extent of coal-bearing formations in the Coal Creek watershed. Coal has been mined on a continuous basis from the watershed for about 150 years.

D: Fort Anderson on Militia Hill. Free miners started the Coal Creek War in 1891 to abolish the convict labor system. The State militia was sent in to build Fort Anderson on Militia Hill to restore order. After numerous battles where convicts, guards, and militia were captured and released, Governor Buck Buchanan sent in sufficient militia with heavy artillery and Gatling guns to end the conflict in 1892. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

E: Mountain View Church. Overlook of Rainbow Bluff Hollow and Fraterville.

★ **F: Fraterville Mine Disaster of 1902.** The Fraterville Mine opened in 1870. On May 19, 1902, an explosion killed 216 men and boys working in the mine. The Fraterville Mine Disaster remains the seventh-worst in the history of mining in the United States and the worst in the South. Powell Harmon left a farewell message telling his sons Henry and Condry never to work in the coal mines. Nine years later, Condry Harmon died in the Cross Mountain Mine Disaster.

★ **G: Thistle Switch.** During the Coal Creek War, six hundred free miners met with Governor Buck Buchanan to negotiate a settlement. Nothing was decided and the Governor sent in additional militia. Colonel Granville Sevier, a distant relative of Tennessee's first Governor, and his men were captured by two thousand miners and put on a train back to Knoxville.

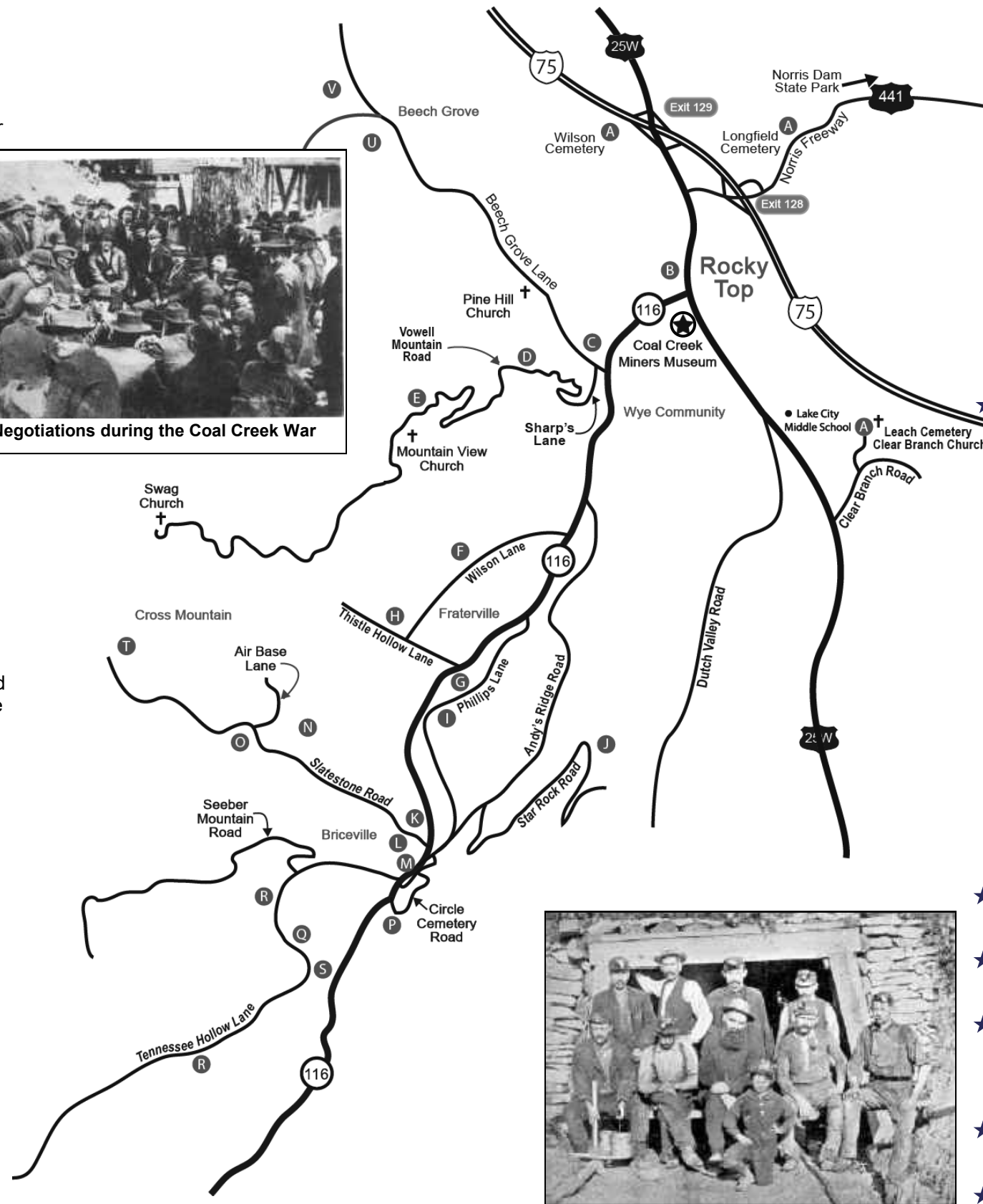
★ **H: Thistle Mine.** The first fatal mine explosion in Tennessee occurred here in January 1891. After the 1911 Cross Mountain Mine explosion, the direction of the Thistle ventilation fan was reversed to remove afterdamp from the Cross Mountain Mine and allow five miners to be rescued.

I: Ghost of Drummond Bridge. In August 1893, during the aftermath of the Coal Creek War, a young miner named Dick Drummond was lynched by the militia from a railroad bridge renamed "Drummond Bridge". Some report that the ghost of Dick Drummond still haunts the Coal Creek watershed.

J: Battle of Fatal Rock. During the Coal Creek War in 1892, Colonel Kellar Anderson, the commander of Fort Anderson, was captured by miners. Major Daniel "Old War Horse" Carpenter organized volunteers from Knoxville to relieve the beleaguered Fort



Negotiations during the Coal Creek War



★ Denotes locations with restricted or limited access which is only available with guided group tours.

Anderson. The army from Knoxville stumbled into what they thought was an army of miners who shouted "surround them, boys". Actually it was only a half dozen sentries. During the confusion, two volunteers were killed and the rest retreated back to Knoxville. "Old War Horse" became exhausted during the retreat and had to be hauled back in a wagon.

K: Briceville United Methodist (Community) Church. Built in 1888 by Welsh Coal Miners, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. Coal Creek Mining and Manufacturing Company and Rev. John Thomas Moore donated land for construction of the church and cemetery. Its location on a hill and architecture make it one of the most beautiful churches in East Tennessee.

M: Briceville Opera House. Opened in the early 1890's, the two-story Briceville Opera House, with its elaborate clock tower, challenged the Clinton courthouse for prestige in Anderson County before it burned around 1918.

L: Briceville Elementary School won a Title I Distinguished School Award in 1999, one of only 88 schools nationwide to win such an award.

★ **N: Cross Mountain Mine Disaster of 1911.** On December 9, 1911, an explosion and the resulting afterdamp (noxious gases formed from the explosion) caused the death of 84 men and boys. Five men were rescued in one of the first successful rescues by the U.S. Bureau of Mines. Mouth-breathing, self-rescuer equipment, demonstrated at Cross Mountain, became standard equipment for miner rescue crews and is still in use today.

O: Air Force Radar Base Station. In the late 1940's, the Federal government decided that an early warning station was needed in case of enemy attack on Oak Ridge. A radar station was built on top of Cross Mountain. U.S. Air Force barracks were built at the base of Cross Mountain. A 10,000-foot long tramway was built to move men from the barracks to the radar station.

P: Circle Cemetery. Thirty-one of the miners killed in the Cross Mountain Mine Disaster are buried in Circle Cemetery in Briceville. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.

Q: Blue Hole of Coal Creek. A deep pool has formed at the confluence of Nunn Hollow and Coal Creek. Blue Hole has been a local gathering spot for generations. Many have been baptize d in the cold water of Blue Hole.

★ **R. Minersville and Tennessee Mine Camps.** Tennessee Hollow was the site of mine camps that expanded from Briceville during the late 1800's and are now ghost towns.

★ **S: Native Americans.** Arrowheads found at the base of cliffs in Tennessee Hollow show that this was a popular spot for early Native Americans.

★ **T: Cross Mountain Summit.** After the radar station opened in 1951, the area suffered a drought and some folks blamed it on the new radar station. Military cutbacks closed the radar station because it was found to be too high in elevation (3500 feet) to detect low flying aircraft.

★ **U: Beech Grove Falls.** Prior to the advent of cars, many families spent Sunday afternoon walking up the railroad tracks for a picnic at Beech Grove Falls.

★ **V: Beech Grove Mine Camp.** Many of the homes in this community were built during the height of coal mining in the early 1900's.