Cherokee museum seeks more grants

Opening rescheduled for mid-2012

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The Museum of the Cherokee in South Carolina, now under construction, might be ready to open by the middle of next year.

Officials backed off of their plans to open the museum this year since they got caught in between grant cycles.

Museum Curator Luther Lyle said Tuesday that state grants for the project are pivotal because those funds reimburse 50 cents for every dollar spent.

More than $20,000 from grants and donations has gone into installing a new roof, windows, doors, floor, electricity and air-conditioning and heating system. Most of the work has been done with the help of volunteers.

Oconee school district officials donated the building to the Oconee Heritage Center, which in turn presented the Cherokee Bear Clan with a 20-year lease on the property.

OHC and the Bear Clan signed a contract in 2010 stipulating that the museum must open within five years.

Lyle said another grant has been submitted to the state national Heritage Corridor for $20,000.

He said the money would help put in wiring for a security system and put up dry wall.

Also in the works is putting together a catalogue with photographs of all the artifacts that have been donated to the museum.

Lyle said Gene and Bette Borman of GBA Productions in Seneca are creating a documentary of the project.

In digging up the museum building's past, Lyle said Col. R.T. Jaynes built it in 1905 as a law office.

Lyle said Jaynes was famous for successfully arguing the Hopkins v. Clemson Agricultural College case in 1911.

Lyle, who also is chairman of the Oconee Arts and Historical Commission, said the project has kept him occupied since he retired from his teaching job.

"I've never had so much fun in my life," he said.



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

Luther Lyle shows off the new mailbox placed at the Museum of the Cherokee in Walhalla on Tuesday. Lyle, the Oconee Arts and Historical Commission chairman, said the museum is on track to open in mid-2012.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685