The Lewis Hine exhibit featuring the Young family is the Museum’s first portable educational outreach tool. The exhibit will tour Tift County schools this winter before becoming a permanent exhibit at the Gallery of the Museum in 2014.

Museum Exhibit Will Focus on 1909 Tifton Cotton Mill Pictures

TIFTON—Lewis Hine took a series of pictures in Tifton on Jan. 22, 1909 that will live forever. And now those unforgettable images are coming to the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in an exhibit made possible
through a Georgia Humanities Council grant. The Big Picture, a Tifton marketing and design company, partnered with the Museum on the design and production of the exhibit’s display panels.

Hine was a social reformer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who used his camera to document the conditions of the working class in factories and mills of both urban and rural areas. He was hired in 1908 by the National Child Labor Committee to take photographs of children near or inside workplaces in an effort to expose their plight and eradicate child labor.

Though his research focused mainly on children working in the textile mills of northeastern states, one of the most moving and remarkable stories revolves around a set of photographs he took at the H.H. Tift Cotton Mill in Tifton, depicting a mother and her nine children who worked at the mill.

One of those photos caught the attention of Massachusetts journalist and historian Joe Manning. Through years of research beginning with an ad Manning placed in the Tifton Gazette in 2006, he identified the woman in the photos as Catherine Young, the widow of a sharecropper who came to Tifton to live in the mill village and work in the mill with nine of her 11 children.

Polly Huff, assistant director and curator at the Museum, said the Young family photographs, along with the story of the family, will be transformed into a museum exhibit. The portable display will tour Tift County schools this winter and will later become a permanent exhibit at the Museum. The Hine project will become the Museum’s first portable educational outreach exhibit and will be available to other institutions and schools upon the completion of its Tifton tour.

“The grant will allow Museum personnel, working together with a group of English and history professors from the main ABAC campus, to bring to life the story of these photographs,”
Huff said. “In tandem with the Museum’s staff, ABAC English professor Sandra Giles and her professional writing class are working to design promotional materials and educational brochures, as well as materials for teachers to use when visiting the exhibit with their students.”

An opening reception for the Hine exhibit will be held at the Museum in the spring of 2014. The event will feature a lecture by Manning and a meet and greet with descendants of the Young family. The opening weekend of the exhibit will also include an oral history workshop presented by oral historian and author Dianne Dent Wilcox, who is the current Humanities Division Chair at Georgia Military College. The morning workshop will be open to anyone interested, with a special afternoon session for local teachers on the techniques of taking and recording oral history.

Huff said all of the opening events and workshops will be free to the entire community. For more information on this exhibit and its availability, interested persons can contact Huff at phuff@abac.edu.

###