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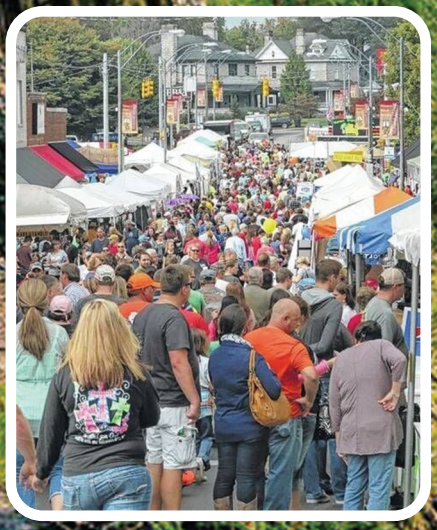

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NorthernUrgentCare.com

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(336) 786-6146
708 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

Gastroenterology
(336) 786-6277
1016 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

General Surgery
(336) 789-9176
1016 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

Mammography
(336) 783-8400
830 Rockford Street, Mount Airy, NC

Obstetrics/Gyn
(336) 786-4522
510 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

Occupational Health
(336) 719-7138
119 Welch Road, Suite C, Mount Airy, NC

Orthopaedics
(336) 719-0011
314 S. South Street, Suite 100, Mount Airy, NC

Pediatrics
(336) 789-6267
100 North Pointe Boulevard. Mount Airy, NC

Rehabilitation
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314 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

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1016 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

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314 S. South Street, Mount Airy, NC

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COVER PHOTO

MICHAEL STEED

A hiker at Pilot Mountain State Park takes in the natural beauty of the area. The land around Pilot Mountain was turned into North Carolina's 14th state park in 1968.

For advertising inquiries, contact The Mount Airy News at 336.415.4631 or The Tribune at 336.835.1513

Always something to do in Surry County

Surry County almost always has activities, fairs, festivals, and musical events going on, in addition to plenty of places to check out such as The Andy Griffith Museum, The Siamese Twins Museum, and the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. To get an updated list of activities and events, visit https://www.visitmayberry.com/events/ or https://www.surryarts.org/

Here is a list of just a few of the events:

TOMMY JARRELL FESTIVAL – MARCH 1

Celebrating one of the pioneers in Old Time music. Sponsored by the Surry Arts Council, the gathering includes workshops, concerts, and the annual youth competition. Generally held on the Saturday closest to March 1. Visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/tommyjarrell.html for more information. At the Historic Earle Theatre.

WINE & CRAFT BEER BUDBREAK FESTIVAL - MAY 3

A celebration of the spring time budbreaking for area wineries, this downtown gathering features live music, as well as booths set up by a number of area and regional wineries and breweries. Sponsored by the Mount Airy Rotary Club to raise money for its charitable work. Downtown Mount Airy, at Main Street and Independence Boulevard. Visit https://budbreakfestival.com/ for more information.

MAYBERRY FARM FEST MAY 17

This family-friendly event celebrates local agriculture with food, demonstrations, crafts, children's activities, music, heritage and cultural displays, tractors and more. Downtown Mount Airy. Visit https://www.mountairydowntown.org/events for more information.

PILOT MOUNTAIN MAYFEST – MAY 9-22

A three-day festival sponsored by the Pilot Mountain Civic Club. Features craft and plant vendors, retail booths, kid's games, live music, and plenty of food from a variety of vendors and trucks. Downtown Pilot Mountain. Visit https://www.pilotmountainnc.org/vist/page/mayfest for more information.

MOUNT AIRY BLUE GRASS AND OLD TIME FIDDLER'S CONVENTION – JUNE 6-7

One of the nation's best-known old time music gatherings, musicians and fans come from across the nation — and sometimes from further — for some of the best down-home music anywhere. While the festival is officially two days, many musicians and fans arrive days early, set up their campers and spend the days talking with friends and playing impromptu mini-concerts. Held at Veteran's Memorial Park, 691 W. Lebanon St. in Mount Airy. For more information visit https://www.surryarts.org/mafiddlersconvention/

DOBSON GROUND STEAK FESTIVAL – JUNE 14

This day-long festival, officially known as the North Carolina Ground Steak Festival, is a celebration of the regional delicacy, combined with music and fun for everyone. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Dobson Square Park.

INDEPENDENCE PARADE AND CELEBRATION – JULY 4

Features a July 4 parade, the reading of the Declaration of Independence in the courtyard of the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History on Main Street in downtown Mount Airy, and more — culminating with a concert and fireworks at Veteran's Memorial Park.

MOONSHINE & RACERS REUNION – SEPTEMBER 13

Main Street will be lined with race cars from yesteryear — dirt track cars, modified, Winston-Cup, and all classes of cars, some dating back to the 1930s, with some of the old-time drivers on hand to share stories and sign autographs. Main Street Mount Airy, usually held the second weekend of September. For more information, visit the group's Facebook page.

MAYBERRY DAYS – SEPT. 22 - SEPT. 28

Mount Airy truly becomes Mayberry during this week-long festival featuring actors who appeared on The Andy Griffith Show, their relatives, and Mayberry tribute artists. Shows, concerts, talks, movie and episode screenings, trivia contests and more. For more information, visit https://www.surryarts.org/mayberrydays/index.html

AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL – OCT. 10-OCT. 12

A three-day craft and food festival that is annually ranked among the Top 20 events in the Southeast. Downtown Mount Air becomes a shopper's paradise for those looking for hand-made crafts, food, games and more. For more

ONGOING EVENTS

Mayberry Cool Cars and Rods Cruise In, the third Sunday of each month, May through September, sees Mount Airy's Main Street lined with old time cars, trucks, classic muscle cars and hot rods. Visit https://www.facebook.com/MayberryCoolCarsandRodsCruiseIn for updated information.

Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series, May through October. Two, sometimes three concerts per week at the Blackmon Amphitheatre featuring some of the biggest musical acts in the Southeast. The Embers featuring Craig Woolard, Legacy Motown Revue, Phatt City, The Holiday Band, Cassette Rewind Band, and Envision are just a few of the dozens of acts visiting the Granite City for the series. For more information, visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/amphitheatre.html

Hot Nights, Hot Cars Cruise-In, the first Saturday of the month, May through October, in Pilot Mountain. One of the oldest, and biggest, cruise-in series around. Pilot Mountain streets are lined with classic autos from years gone by, hot rods, even a few NASCAR race vehicles from time to time. Visit https://www.pilotmountainnc.org/238/Hot-Nights-Hot-Cars-Cruise-In for updated information.

SURRY COUNTY A Snapshot

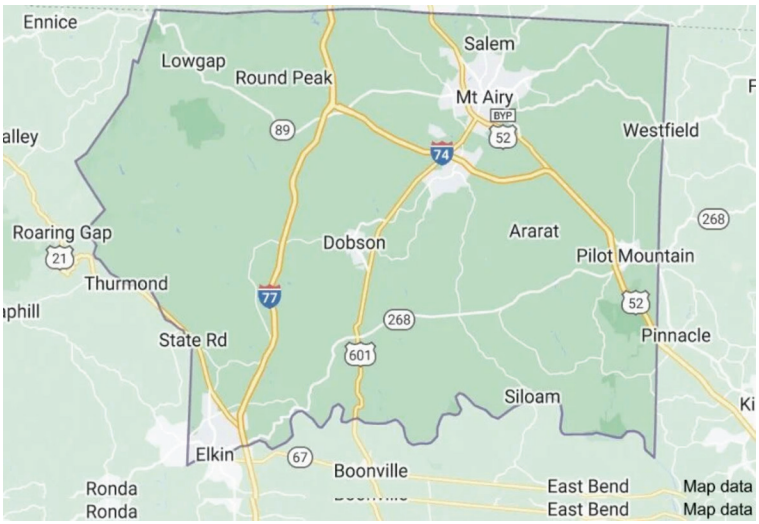
A quick look Surry County — home of Mayberry and where the Blue Ridge Parkway started.

LOCATION

Surry County is part of the Piedmont Triad metropolitan area. The county is part of the Yadkin Valley AVA, an American Viticultural Area. Wines made from grapes grown in Surry County may carry the Yadkin Valley on their label insignia. Surry County rests on North Carolina's northern border with Virginia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county covers an area of 536 square miles, of which 532 square miles is land and 4.1 square miles is water.

POPULATION PROFILE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Surry County is 71,462 (2023 estimate); 21% of the population is younger than 18, 21.4% is older than 65. There are 33,906 housing units in the county, 73.3% of which are owner-occupied. The median household income, averaged over 2019 to 2023, is $56,095. 90.7% of homes have a computer, 83.4% have a broadband internet subscription. Among residents age 25 or older, 82.6% have a high school education or higher; 19.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.



SALES TAX

The combined sales tax in Surry County is 7% — 2.25% of that is a local sales tax, while 4.75% is state sales tax

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SURRY COUNTY A Snapshot

AREA GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

SURRY COUNTY

Surry County is governed by a Board of Commissioners, with each seat on the five-member partisan board up for re-election every four years, with staggered terms. The commissioners elect a chairman on a rotating, annual basis. The board consists of:

Mark Marion, Chairman, Central District, 336-401-1787, marionm@co.surry.nc.us

Bill Goins, Vice Chairman, Mount Airy District, Mount Airy, 336-401-7350, goinsb@co.surry.nc.us

Van Tucker, East District, Pilot Mountain, 336-401-1466, tuckerv@co.surry.nc.us

Eddie Harris, South District, State Road, 336-401-1842, harrise@ co.surry.nc.us

Melissa Hiatt, Mount Airy District; Mount Airy, 336-401-7870, hiattm@co.surry.nc.us

For additional information visit at https://www.co.surry.nc.us/ departments/(a_through_j)/commissioners.php

MOUNT AIRY

Mount Airy is governed by a non-partisan five-member Board of Commissioners and a mayor, who is elected by popular vote.

The board consists of:

Mayor Jon Cawley, 336-786-3504, jcawley@mountairy.org

Phil Thacker, South Ward Commissioner, 336-786-3501, pthacker@mountairy.org

Calvin Vaughn, South Ward Commissioner, 336-786-3501, cvaughn@mountairy.org

David Hall, North Ward Commissioner, 336-786-3501, dhall@mountairy.org

Chad Hutchens, North Ward Commissioner, 336-786-3501, chutchens@mountairy.org

Deborah Cochran, At Large Commissioners, 336-786-3501, dcochran@mountairy.org

More information on the commissioners can be found at https://www.mountairy.org/Directory.aspx?did=5

TOWN OF DOBSON

Mayor Ricky Draughn, 336-374-8646, rdraughn@surry.net

Wayne Atkins, 336-356-8061, atkinsjw@surry.net

The Historic Surry County Courthouse in Dobson.

Robin Testerman Beeson, 336-466-3090, testermanrd@gmail.com

Todd Dockery, 336-356-2233, tskdockery@surry.net

Amy Whitaker, 336-648-2900, agdavis12@yahoo.com

Walter White, 336-356-4145, wcwhite@surry.net

For more information on Dobson visit https://www.dobson-nc.com/27/Government

TOWN OF ELKIN

Mayor Will Gwyn, none 336-244-205, wgwyn@elkinnc.org

Graham Ray, 336-488-7494, blackbear.elkin@gmail.com

Alvin Hayes, 336-526-4408, ahayes@elkinnc.org

Robert H. Ball Jr. 336-835-2256, roberthball@gmail.com

Cicely McCulloch, 336-835-3133, cicelycmc@gmail.com

Jeff Eidson, 336-835-3607, jce@gbenergy.com

TOWN OF PILOT MOUNTAIN

Mayor Evan Cockerham, 336-368-2247, ecockerham@ pilotmountainnc.org

Donna Kiger, 336-368-2247, dkiger@pilotmountainnc.org

Scott Needham, 336-368-2247, sneedham@pilotmountainnc.org

Rachel Collins, 336-368-2247, rcollins@pilotmountainnc.org

Dwight Atkins, 336-368-2247, datkins@pilotmountainnc.org

NORTH CAROLINA REPRESENTATIVES

Sarah Stevens, NC State House, District 90, 919-715-1883, sarah.stevens@ncleg.gov

Eddie Settle, NC State Senator, 36th District, 919-733-5742, eddie.settle@ncleg.gov

US REPRESENTATIVES

Virginia Foxx, U.S. House of Representatives, Fifth District, 400 Shadowline Dr., Suite 205, Boone, NC 28607, 828-265-0240

Ted Budd, U.S. Senate, 128 Peachtree Ln., Suite A, Advance, NC 27006, 336-998-1313

Sen. Thom Tillis, 310 New Bern Ave., Suite 122, Raleigh, NC 27601, 919-856-4630

CLIMATE & GEOGRAPHY

Surry County is located both within the Piedmont region of central North Carolina and in the Appalachian Mountains region of western North Carolina. Most of the eastern two-thirds of the county lies within the Piedmont, a region of gently rolling hills and valleys. However, the Piedmont of Surry County also contains a small portion of the Sauratown Mountains; Surry County marks the western end of the Sauratown Mountain range. The western third of the county lies within the Blue Ridge Mountains, and they dominate the county's western horizon.

The highest point in Surry County is Fisher Peak in the Blue Ridge; it rises to 3,570 feet above sea level. However, the best-known peak in Surry County is not the highest. That honor goes to Pilot Mountain, an isolated monadnock and a North Carolina landmark. Pilot Mountain rises 2,421 feet above the surrounding countryside, and can be seen for miles.

Another notable peak in Surry County is Cumberland Knob, in the northwestern corner of the county. It was here, on Sept. 11, 1935 that construction on the Blue Ridge Parkway began.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

There are several law enforcement agencies in Surry County, serving various jurisdictions depending upon where one lives. For emergencies, call 911 and the appropriate agency will be dispatched.

- Surry County Sheriffs Department, Sheriff Steve C. Hiatt is at 218 N. Main St. Dobson.. Phone 336-401-8900. The sheriff's office has countywide law enforcement jurisdiction, as well as handling security for the county courts and the county detention center.

- Mount Airy Police Department under the management of Chief Dale Watson, at 150 Rockford St. Mount Airy; 336-786-3535. The police department is responsible for law enforcement within the boundaries of the city of Mount Airy, the largest municipality in Surry County.

- Dobson Police Department managed by Chief Shawn Myers at 307 N. Main St. Dobson; 336-356-8161. The Dobson force offers law enforcement and security in the county seat.

- Elkin Police Department, under the leadership of Chief Lt. Joey Vanhoy, 226 N. Bridge St. Elkin; 336-258-8910, offers law enforcement service in the town of Elkin, at the southern tip of Surry County.

- Pilot Mountain Police Department, under the leadership of Interim Chief Adrian Tillotson, 124 W Main St, Pilot Mountain, 336-368-4725, offers law enforcement services in Pilot Mountain.

- North Carolina Highway Patrol offers statewide enforcement of highway rules and regulations, as well as criminal law enforcement. Locally, the district office is at 155 Patrol Station Rd. Mount Airy, 336-786-8552.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Surry County Economic Development Partnership. This agency offers a number of free and confidential services and resources to help companies of all sizes. The organization provides direct assistance to companies interested in starting, expanding or relocating a business in Surry County and any of our municipalities. The main office is located at 1218 State Street in Mount Airy, and can be reached at 336-401-9900 or via email at surryedp@surry.net

- The Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce works as an advocacy and support agency whose aim is to advance, promote, and encourage successful business growth for the chamber's members. Reach the chamber at 200 N. Main St.https://www. mtairyncchamber.org/contact-us/ in Mount Airy, by calling 336- 786-6116 or online via a contact form at

- The Yadkin Valley Chamber of Commerce works to promote a positive business environment, facilitates community betterment and supports economic development in Yadkin, Wilkes and Surry counties. Reach the chamber at 257 Standard Street in Elkin, by phone at 336-526-1111, or by email at president@yadkinvalley.org

PROPERTY TAXES

Property taxes vary widely in Surry County, depending upon which fire district one lives in, as well as higher but varied rates in the four municipalities. For detailed information on tax rates, visit https://www.co.surry.nc.us/departments/(k_through_z)/tax/personal_property.php

A Mayberry Sheriff tour car passes the Andy Griffith Mural in downtown Mount Airy.

SURRY COUNTY A Snapshot

AREA SCHOOLS

Surry County has three separate public school systems: Mount Airy City Schools, Surry County Schools, and Elkin City Schools, along with Millennium Charter Academy in Mount Airy.

MOUNT AIRY CITY SCHOOLS

Superintendent Dr. Phillip Brown. pbrown@mtairy.k12.nc.us

The Board of Education is a partisan elected school board.

Chairman: Tim Matthews, Mount Airy At Large member, tmatthews@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Jayme Brant, Vice Chairman, Mount Airy District B, jbrant@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Kyle Leonard, Mount Airy District A, kleonard@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Randy Moore, Mount Airy District A, rmoore@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Ben Cooke, Mount Airy District B, bcooke@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Thomas Horton, Mount Airy District C, thorton@mtairy.k12.nc.us

Mark Welch, Mount Airy District D, mwelch@mtairy.k12.nc.us

More information can be found at https://www.mtairy.k12.nc.us/

SURRY COUNTY SCHOOLS

Superintendent: Dr. Travis Reeves, reevest@surry.k12.nc.us

Board of Education -- a partisan elected board.

Chairman, T.J. Bledsoe, Chairman, District 4, bledsoet@surry.k12.nc.us

Vice Chairman, Raleigh Scales, District 5, scalesr@surry.k12.nc.us

Dale Badgett, District 1, badgettd@surry.k12.nc.us

Tony Hutchens, District 2, hutchenst@surry.k12.nc.us

Kent Whitaker, District 3, whitakerk@surry.k12.nc.us

More information can be found at https://www.surry.k12.nc.us/

ELKIN CITY SCHOOLS

Superintendent Dr. Steve Hall, halls@elkin.k12.nc.us

Board of Education, a partisan elected board.

Chair: Jennifer Kleinheksel

Vice Chair: Jillann Bellia

Earl Blackburn

Haley Sullivan

Susan Baker

For more information on Elkin City Schools visit https://www.elkincityschools.org/

MILLENNIUM CHARTER ACADEMY

Millennium Charter Academy is an independent public school in Mount Airy serving grades kindergarten through twelve.

Head Master: Paul Rezzo, paulrezzo@mcacademy.com

Board of Directors

President: Druery Devore

Treasurer: Christopher Willingham

Ann Jones

James Crossingham

Melinda Shew

Susan Campbell

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2025 DOWNTOWN EVENTS

APRIL 19
ArtWalk

MAY 3
Bud Break Wine Festival

MAY 8 & NOV, 6
Girls Night Out

MAY 16 - 17
Mayberry Farm Fest
Tractor Parade May 16, 5pm

MAY 18, JUNE 15, JULY 20
AUGUST 17, SEPT 21, OCTOBER 19
Mayberry Cool Cars & Rods Cruise-in

JUNE 6 - 7
Fiddler's Convention

JULY 4
Independence Day
Parade & Celebration

SEPTEMBER 22 - 28
Mayberry Days

OCTOBER 10 - 12
Autumn Leaves Festival

OCTOBER 31
Halloween Celebration 3-5pm

NOVEMBER 11
Veterans Day parade

NOVEMBER 22
Christmas Parade 5pm

NOVEMBER 29
Small Business Saturday

DECEMBER 6
Downtown Holiday Open House

arts North Carolina Arts Council

This project was supported by the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

MOUNT AIRY DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

THE SURRY ARTS COUNCIL

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SURRY COUNTY A Snapshot

LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

- NC Cooperative Extension, 915 E Atkins St, Suite 300, Dobson, 336-401-8025 Joanna Radford, County Extension Director; joanna_radford@ncsu.edu

- NC Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), 155 Patrol Station Rd, Mount Airy. 919-715-7000, 1687 N Bridge St, Elkin; 336-835-5247

- Vehicle and License Plate Agency, 137 Riverside Dr, Mount Airy; 336-786-5201, 220 W Main St, Elkin; 336-835-2757

- Social Security Administration, 1187 N Andy Griffith Pkwy, Mount Airy, 800-772-1213

- Surry County Board of Elections, 915 E Atkins St, Dobson; 336-401-8227, Michella Huff, Director; elections@surrycountync.gov

- Surry County Building Inspections, 122 Hamby Rd, Dobson; 336-401-8300, Keith Kiger, Lead Building Codes Inspector; kigerk@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Health and Nutrition Center, 118 Hamby Rd, Dobson; 336-401-8400, Samantha B. Ange, MPH, RD, LDN,, Health Director; anges@co.surry.nc.us,

- Surry County Register of Deeds, 201 E Kapp St, Dobson; 336-401-8150, W. Todd Harris, Register of Deeds; harrist@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Social Services, 118 Hamby Rd, Dobson; 336-401-8700, Sharon Schueneman, Director, 336-401-8711,schuenemans@co.surry.nc.us

Two Surry County Sheriff's Office cruisers.

- Surry County Veterans Service, 1218 State St, Mount Airy; 336-783-8820, Mike Scott, U.S. Navy Retired, Director; scottmi@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Airport Authority, 146 Howard Woltz Jr Way, Mount Airy; 336-789-5153, mwkops@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Manager's Office, 114 W Atkins St, Dobson; 336-401-8201, Chris Knopf, County Manager; knopfc@co.surry.nc.us

- Sandra Snow, Assistant County Manager; snows@co.surry.nc.us,

- Surry County Development Services, 122 Hamby Rd, Dobson; 336-401-8300, Adrienne Gardner, Development Services, Director, dollyhigha@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Emergency Services, 1218 State St, Mount Airy; 336-783-9000 Eric Southern, Director; southerner@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry Fire Marshal's Office, 1218 State St, Mount Airy; 336-783-9040, Jimmy Ashburn, Fire Marshal; ashburnji@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Tax Department, 915 E Atkins St, Dobson; 336-401-8100, Penny Harrison, Tax Administrator; harrisonp@co.surry.nc.us

- Surry County Soil and Water Conservation, 915 E Atkins St, Dobson; 336-386-8751, Laken Creed, District Director; Laken.Creed@usda.gov

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SURRY COUNTY
A Snapshot

EMERGENCY SERVICES & FIRE PROTECTION

There are several agencies across Surry County and its municipalities which handle fire protection and emergency rescue services. For emergencies, call 911 and the appropriate agency will be dispatched.

- Surry County Emergency Services, Director Eric Southern, 1218 State St. Mount Airy, 336-783-9000;

Ararat Volunteer Fire Department
Bannertown Volunteer Fire Department
C.C. Camp Volunteer Fire Department
Central Surry Fire Department
Dobson Fire Department
Elkin Fire Department
Four Way Fire Department
Franklin Community Volunteer Fire Department
Jot-Um-Down Volunteer Fire Department
Mount Airy Fire Department
Mountain Park Volunteer Fire Department
Pilot Knob Volunteer Fire Department
Pilot Mountain Volunteer Fire Department
Pine Ridge Fire Department
Shoals Volunteer Fire Department
Skull Camp Fire Department
South Surry Fire Department
State Road Volunteer Fire Department
Westfield Volunteer Fire Department
White Plains Volunteer Fire Department

WATER AND SEWER SERVICE

Water and sewer service is available in the county's four municipalities, as well as in parts of the county, via several different providers, depending upon what portion of the county.

They are:

- Mount Airy - City of Mount Airy, 300 S. Main St., Mount Airy, 336-786-3517

- Pilot Mountain - City of Pilot Mountain, 124 W. Main St., Pilot Mountain, 336-368-2247

- Dobson - Town of Dobson, 307 N. Main St. Dobson, 336-356-8962

- Elkin- Town of Elkin- 226 N. Bridge St. Elkin- 336-258-8900

- Flat Rock-Bannertown Water and Sewer District. This District was created in 2002 and is governed by the District's Board of Directors. The district is located east of Mount Airy along NC 103 in the Flat Rock and Bannertown communities and was created due to public health needs. Call 336-401-8201 for more information.

- Interstates Water and Sewer District. The district was created in 2004 and is governed by the District's Board of Directors. The district is located in the vicinity of the Interstate 74/NC 89 and Interstate 77/NC 89 interchanges and was created for economic development purposes to facilitate future commercial and industrial growth. Call 336-401-8201 for more information. Yadkin Valley Sewer Authority: 500 NC Hwy 268 W., 336-835-9819

PARKS AND RECREATION

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- Surry County Parks and Recreation- 122 Hamby Rd. Dobson, 336-401-8235

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A historical geological waypoint

Pilot Mountain

still beckons to travelers

MICHAEL STEED

A hiker at Pilot Mountain State Park takes in the natural beauty of the area. The land around Pilot Mountain was turned into North Carolina's 14th state park in 1968.

RYAN KELLY | ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com

The Saura, or Cheraw, people migrated to this part of the state in the late 1600s having left their homes in the mountains near present-day Asheville, according to the Town of Pilot Mountain's history, to settle the land near the Dan River.

The unique shape of the towering dome of the mountain was, according to editor of the Encyclopedia of North Carolina William S. Powell, "A beacon for both Native Americans and incoming settlers for centuries."

"The mountain's unmistakable shape, visible from great distances, has been a guidepost for travelers for centuries. The Saponi and Tutelo Indians who lived in the area called the peak Jomeokee, the "Great Guide" or "Pilot," he wrote.

Due to the inability for rivers to connect the ocean to points this far inland, trading routes began to develop that favored travel over land to and from Virginia. What had once been an Indian trail was later known as the Great Wagon Road and became the main trade route reaching the interior.

Powell wrote that to the folks on the Great Wagon Road, just the sight of the mountain rising above the land around it, "Was a boost to the spirit of the people who were embarking on new lives in the Carolinas."

After 1710 the Saura natives left the area and according to the North Carolina Office of State Archeology they established a new colony in South Carolina, many others joined the Catawba Nation after 1737.

They left their mark though, including their preferred name for the mountain, Pilot, a notion

which seems to have stuck as those navigating the Yadkin Valley in the 21st century are still using the dome of Pilot Mountain as a landmark.

One of America's forefathers has a connection to the area, wrote Jonathan Martin for the North Carolina History Project. "Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson's father, were the first to map Pilot Mountain in 1751."

"The first name was on the Fry/Jefferson map in mid-1700s was Mount Ararat or The Stonehead," McKelvey explained.

A historic postcard of Pilot Mountain from the North Carolina State Archives.

NAVIGATING WITH THE PILOT

The distinctive shape of Pilot Mountain was used as a navigation landmark for the early native tribes and also settlers from northern colonies who began to fill the interior of the state of North Carolina and created a culture that was markedly different from those found in the Eastern reaches of the state.

In the town's own written history they said, "Unlike the settlement of Eastern North Carolina, with large plantations, widespread use of slave labor, and the establishment of the Church of England, the Piedmont region, including Pilot Mountain, was inhabited mainly by subsistence farmers, with smaller farms, with few or no slaves. The fertile land provided excellent sites for mills, farms, and

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ADAM MOWERY

A Park Ranger inside Pilot Mountain State Park. NC Parks said that in 2023 more than 1 million people visited the park. Leaders in the Town of Pilot Mountain hope they can bring some of those visitors into the downtown to enjoy all the town has to offer.

especially the growth of tobacco."

They also said that unlike the settlements in the Eastern part of the state, "The region offered a variety of religious denominations not seen in the eastern parts of North Carolina, including Quaker, Lutheran, German Reformed, Moravian, Dunkard, Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist. This variety of religious organizations is still evident in Pilot Mountain."

"Countless Moravian settlers used the Great Wagon Road to arrive at their Wachovia settlement in the 1750s," Martin said.

Powell also detailed the excitement of one Moravian settler, noting his party was 37 days into their journey from Pennsylvania when the mountain was first seen. "We saw the Pilot Mountain, and rejoiced to think that we would soon see the boundary of Carolina, and set foot in our own dear land."

"Wachovia quickly became an established urban center and led to further settlement of the Piedmont region including the Town of Pilot Mountain," the town wrote.

RISING ABOVE THE REST

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources said, "Pilot Mountain is one of North Carolina's most recognizable landmarks. Rising 2,420 feet above sea level, it can be seen for hundreds of square miles." For comparison, author Jim McKelvey said the Town of Pilot Mountain sits at 1,100 feet above sea level.

"The unusual mountain is believed to be the sole survivor of the ancient Sauratown Mountain range after softer peaks eroded away over millions of years."

FILE PHOTO

Vendors line Main Street in Pilot Mountain for Mayfest 2024.

In Powell's writing on Pilot Mountain he said, "Geologists believe that the 200-foot high Big Pinnacle was formed by the compression of sand from a beach that existed in Western North Carolina approximately one billion years ago."

"The sand was first compressed into sandstone and later became quartzite through heat and pressure. The metamorphic rock of the mountain's base is believed to have developed from a deep marine environment." Hikers in Pilot Mountain State Park these days are still known to find large quartz and sandstone with flecks of calcite or mica during their hikes.

Martin described the mountain's distinctive shape. "Pilot Mountain's most distinctive features are its two pinnacles, Big Pinnacle and Little Pinnacle. The Big Pinnacle, a 200-feet tall bald rock that extends from the mountain's base, is covered with vegetation at its crest. Little Pinnacle, accessible by tourists and hikers, connects to the Big Pinnacle."

Views from the Little Pinnacle allow mountain goers to see, "Hundreds of square miles of the Piedmont and the nearby mountains of North Carolina and Virginia," according to the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation.

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According to the state, the pinnacle formation had begun to be named on maps as Pilot Mountain by 1808.

Fam Brownlee, a local historian who worked with the North Carolina Collection in the Forsyth County Public Library, penned a piece titled, "Pilot Mountain ... a brief illustrated history of our best known landmark … including a true account of the Battle of Pilot Mountain that never happened." In it, he said that Andre Matthis purchased the mountain and surrounding land in 1796. McKelvey added that the deed was for roughly 9,000 acres.

"Over the next few decades, his heirs added to the holdings. By the 1850s, one of those heirs, H.T. Gillam, has established an inn near the base of the mountain and was operating a tourist business. If you spent the night at his inn, you got a free tour of the summit." There are likely travelers crossing this part of the state today who would take Gillam up on that offer.

DEAN PALMER

Resident Josie Grogan poses with a bottle cap mural in downtown Pilot Mountain, just one of the pops of color to be found in the downtown area.

The mountain was held by private landowners from 1857 to 1968 until it was established at the North Carolina's fourteenth state park.

RAILROADS BRING CHANGE

The Town of Pilot Mountain grew in size and importance in the 20th century especially after a railway line began to run through the town linking Mount Airy to the seaport of Wilmington.

"With the completion of the railroad in 1888, the depot became a center of commercial and social activity. The railroad gave rise to the growth of Pilot Mountain and created the need for an organized government. On March 9, 1889, the Act

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of Incorporation for the Town of Pilot Mountain was adopted."

"The Act of Incorporation did not immediately create major changes to the rural, small town way of life of Pilot Mountain. Those in town provided goods to meet the needs of an agricultural community: livery stables, harness makers, clothiers, general merchants, blacksmiths, tobacco factories, doctors, and of course churches," the town wrote.

Anyone who has been involved in the probate courts can attest that dealing with heirs of an estate can be challenging. This was true with the mountain as well, according to Brownlee's account. He said that heirs of Matthis and Gillam wanted "to get their share of the wealth" from the mountain and surrounding lands. A protracted lawsuit went on for 17 years before a court ruled that the property would be sold at auction with heirs sharing the profits.

The heirs and many bidding parties were under the impression the mountain and land would be sold off in subdivided lots, but that was not the case. Max Butner of Pinnacle won the auction in November 1915 and said he represented a group of businessowners from nearby Winston-Salem; their winning bid was for $26,500.

FORMATION OF THE TOWN OF PILOT MOUNTAIN

In the twentieth century, a portrait of the modern Pilot Mountain began to emerge with the construction of the first public school in 1910. This was followed by the opening of the Bank of Pilot Mountain in 1914, added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997, and the first power plant in 1916. In the period between the World Wars, the town opened its first library and movie theatre.

In the late 1960s there was a push to get the mountain and park brought into the state park system. Martin explained, "Mrs. J.W. Beasley, the owner of Pilot in the 1960s, and the Pilot Mountain Preservation and Park Committee worked together to make the land a public park. In 1976 the park became a National Natural Landmark... and today the park is over 3,700 acres where tourists enjoy hiking, excursions, camping trips, and horseback riding at the park."

Although the Saura left centuries ago, there was renewed modern interest in their former habitat in the Sauratown Mountain.

Mary Beth Fitts, Assistant State Archaeologist, explained that while digging, a young man in

BILL COUGHLIN

The Sauratown Woman, Sara, statue as seen at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh. The remains of "Sara" were found in 1972 which prompted archeological excavations of the former lands of the Sauratown people who left the area circa 1710.

neighboring Stokes County stumbled upon the remains of the Sauratown Woman, or "Sara," in 1972. She wrote, "Forensic analysis estimated she

was between 18 and 21 years old, and she was buried with a multitude of artifacts suggesting a high status in her matrilineal society."

From 1972 to 1983 researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Research Laboratories of Archaeology excavated a portion of their home site which was occupied from around 1670 to 1710.

After recovering her remains, the state and the researchers from UNC teamed with other experts to create a full-body replica of Sara at the NC Museum of History in Raleigh. Before rushing to the state capital to see Sara, the museum is closed for two to three years for renovation.

RYAN KELLY

In downtown Pilot Mountain singers offer a selection of songs before the Christmas parade got underway.

FROM TEXTILES TO TOURISM

Pilot Mountain, along with many communities in this area, "Witnessed a dramatic boost to its economy when textile manufactures arrived. The textile industry remained a strong economic driving force until the 1990s."

As this part of the state has dealt with a changing industrial landscape following the departure of the majority of textiles and more distance in time from the days when tobacco farming was king, the town said they have "undergone a shift to blend old and new by focusing on small locally owned businesses, viticulture (wine), and innovative agriculture."

"Now, as in years past, Pilot Mountain remains an ideal setting, offering open spaces where businesses, ideas, and families can grow."

Pilot Mountain today is a quiet, close-knit community of less than 2,000 people nestled in the shadow of the mountain who along with Mount Airy, Elkin, and county seat Dobson make up the larger population centers of Surry County.

Known for residents with a welcoming attitude, quality schools, and beautiful sightlines of the famous mountain, the Town of Pilot Mountain

FILE PHOTO

A young man looks cool and enjoys a cool treat during one of the Town of Pilot Mountain's Street festivals.

beckons to visitors, and potential future residents as well, to come over from Pilot Mountain State Park and take in the shops and eateries on Main Street, enjoy recreation at the Armfield Civic Center, or make a purchase at the West End Arts Market.

After all, the town put it down in writing so there would be no mistaking it: Pilot Mountain is more than just a mountain.

TOWN OF PILOT MOUNTAIN

The Foothills Dinner on Main was a fundraiser held for several years in Pilot Mountain to raise money for downtown projects. The town has a variety of street festivals and community get togethers throughout the year.

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Pilot Mountain
is more than the knob

TOM JOYCE

Crowds fill the streets of Pilot Mountain during Mayfest, an annual gathering scheduled this year for May 9-11.

TOM JOYCE | tjoyce@mtairynews.com

PILOT MOUNTAIN – People who hear the words Pilot Mountain usually think of the majestic peak that looms over the surrounding landscape, but the nearby town of the same name has its own lofty attractions.

"We strive to create purposeful events, foster a sense of unity, promote local engagement, facilitate economic growth for our area and local businesses and highlight the things that make Pilot Mountain unique," Assistant Main Street Coordinator Alyssa Munson observed regarding the thought process for planning various activities.

"Ultimately, we want to take pride in the place we call home, give back to our residents and provide a welcoming, fun, safe community for all," Munson added.

MAYFEST TURNING 42

The Mayfest celebration on the streets of Pilot Mountain is an annual testament to the fun and local engagement aspects of the town's goals in organizing events.

Mayfest, spearheaded by the Pilot Mountain Civic Club, is now in its 42nd year.

The 2025 street festival is scheduled from May 9-11, offering craft and food/beverage vendors, live music, special exhibits and more.

"It brings an influx of more than 30,000 people to our town," according to the Main Street coordinator.

She says the large festival boasts the "absolute best" of vendors, and also is proud of the live music performed all weekend, typically of the beach and bluegrass genres.

Aside from all the enjoyment is the fact that proceeds from Mayfest go back into the community for various needs, based on detailed information assembled by Munson on the various local events.

In January and February, the Pilot Mountain Civic

Club presented more than $20,000 to local charities, non-profits and more.

It also supplies local elementary backpack programs; food, clothes and monetary gifts to middle and high school students; and sponsors town Little League teams.

TOM JOYCE

This is a sampling of the unique rides to be spotted during the Hot Nights, Hot Cars Cruise-In series in downtown Pilot.

CRUISE-INS ROLL ON

Another popular attraction in Pilot Mountain is the Hot Nights, Hot Cars Cruise-In series held downtown.

"These are one of the town's biggest draws," the Main Street coordinator summed up concerning the "family oriented classic car show."

Its format features muscle cars, vintage vehicles and other unique rides traversing Main Street or parking along it to be admired by attendees.

The day-long cruise-ins are held on the first Saturday of each month from May through October, with admission free.

"They offer an open street cruise-in, live beach music and food and beverage vendors with a familiar, nostalgic feel," Munson described.

The cruise-ins are put on by a group called Pilot Mountain Unites.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Another annual gathering in downtown Pilot Mountain which draws crowds is National Night Out.

The local event is part of a community-building campaign across the U.S. which promotes police-public partnerships and camaraderie to make neighborhoods safer and more caring places to live.

"We do love supporting this cause and getting our various participating police, fire and rescue organizations together to spend an evening of food, fellowship and fun with the local residents," Munson agreed.

"We typically have free food (including hot dogs), a DJ, games, safety demos and vehicles, exhibits and even a dunk tank."

National Night Out will be held this year on Aug. 5.

SCARING UP FUN

The Halloween season also is a special time in the town of Pilot Mountain, led by an observance that combines trunk-or-treat activities and a Monsters on Main Parade.

It is slated this year for Oct. 25.

"This event is a personal favorite, and I had so much fun with it last year," Munson recalled.

"Our downtown trunk-or-treat is one of the largest in the county and surrounding areas." Attendance in 2024 was put at more than 4,000.

"In the evening, we have the local-favorite Monsters on Main Parade, which is a walking costume parade, focused mainly on handmade costumes and lanterns," Munson explained.

It was originated by a local artist and resident, Josie Grogan, who holds workshops leading up to the parade to work on the costumes, art and lanterns to be used.

There are prizes for costume contest winners at the end, separated by category and age group.

Pilot Mountain's Halloween festivities further feature a DJ-led family friendly Halloween-themed "block party" with food and beverage vendors on site.

Last year, a petting zoo also was set up during the day.

"We ended the night with a very large, memorable fireworks show, which was a first," Munson related.

"It was a huge hit and done extremely well by Pyrotecnico."

Organizers are hoping to recruit sponsors to offer the fireworks show again this year because it was so well-received.

TOM JOYCE

Police and volunteers serve up free hot dogs and other food during National Night Out in Pilot Mountain.

Even before all that was Halloween Movie Night, last year named the "Boo Bash."

It is planned again in 2025, tentatively on Oct. 11 at Armfield Civic Center.

A family friendly Halloween movie (last year it was "Hocus Pocus") is screened outdoors at the amphitheater.

A local Girl Scout troop sells concessions and there is free face painting.

Pilot Mountain will end the year with Christmas activities such as a tree lighting and downtown parade, and a spring Easter egg hunt is scheduled at Armfield Civic Center,

Regardless of the occasion the same sense of community prevails, according to Munson.

"I would add that, especially right now, bringing people together and creating smiles are some of the simplest, yet most important and most rewarding parts of my job," she said of helping to coordinate local events.

TOM JOYCE

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Mount Airy

has varied history, bright future

STAFF REPORT

In many ways, the history of Mount Airy is similar to those of the rest of Surry County. The earliest inhabitants of the area now making up Mount Airy were the Cheraw people, also known as the Saraw or Saura.

They were largely gone by the time settlers arrived. Many of those early settlers made their way to this area from the north, traversing a long-established wagon trail into what would become Surry County and Mount Airy.

Those early settlers were largely English, Scotch-Irish, and German, settling at the edge of the frontier. Mount Airy, known for generations as The Hollows, began to grow once it was established as a stage coach stop on the road from Galax, Virginia to Winston-Salem.

Because of its proximity to area waterways, a wide range of raw materials -- lumber, land, and the soon-to-be-discovered granite query -- and with the eventual arrival of a train line through the village, Mount Airy began taking root as a town and growing.

Young men seeking to stake their claim in life were drawn to the area and established early industry in Elkin and Mount Airy.

The businesses offered employment and a market for goods and services which fueled the growth of Mount Airy and surrounding communities.

As the South struggled to recover from the Civil War, the next generation of leaders worked to repair and strengthen local businesses.

Mount Airy was officially chartered as a town in 1885, and three years later local businessman William Moore was able to get a railroad track to run through the city, establishing a depot.

The area, already booming as a tobacco community, grew from there. Over the final years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th, textile and furniture firms were founded in the town, building factories that eventually employed hundreds, then thousands.

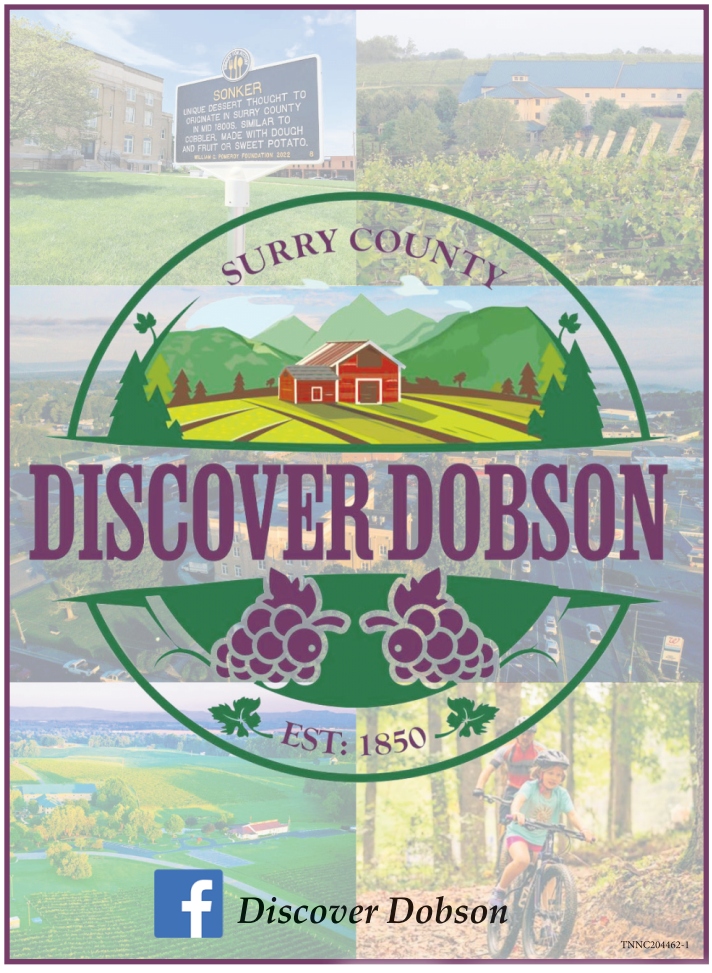
While Mount Airy was susceptible to economic ups and down as were other communities, the local economy thrived for decades with textiles, furniture, and tobacco farming driving the economy.

“The county’s population grew 54% from 1890 to 1910 when there were 29,705 living and working here.”

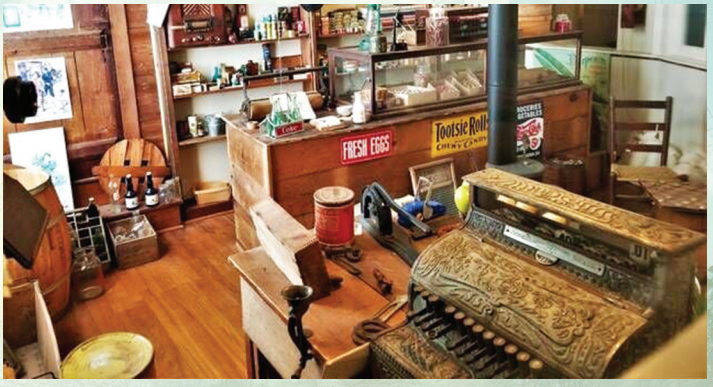
The needs of industry for water, power, and fast communication benefited the public directly. As more factories were built the towns developed public waterworks, power generation stations, and telephone exchanges in Mount Airy and Elkin between 1892 and 1900. Streets were paved in Mount Airy in 1916.

The earliest manufacturing — cotton and woolen mills, box and barrel manufacturing, and a shoe factory — sat next to newer

The earliest residents of Mount Airy and the surrounding area were the Saura people, who would have lived in dwellings much like this one from an exhibit at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. The biggest difference would have been in their time, the Saura lodges would have been much larger and housed several families. Small fires for heat, low cots and handwork would have been in the homes. Most of their waking hours would have been spent in communal areas of the village, growing, gathering, preparing, or preserving food.



Two Model Ts are on display in the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History.



By the latter parts of the 19th century and throughout much of the 20th century, Mount Airy residents would have shopped at general stores much like this exhibit in the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. This display is made up of artifacts from H.F. Wright Store that stood in Big Creek Township, Stokes County from 1888-1985.

tobacco warehouses and factories in the middle of the 1800s. The first furniture factories were established in the 1890s, soon followed by supporting businesses of sawmills and mirror production.

When the local tobacco industry took a hit during the late 1890s during the Duke family's attempt to corner the market with their American Tobacco Company's tobacco trust, businesses looked to work with local mills and turned to textile production.

A more prosperous and comfortable town attracted more business and more people.

The county's population grew 54% from 1890 to 1910 when there were 29,705 living and working here.

Over the decades since then, the city continued growing into a thriving mill town, only to lose much of its economic base in the latter portions of the 20th century and early years of the 21st century. Textile and furniture firms either closed, or moved operations off shore, leaving behind unemployed workers and empty buildings.

But Mount Airy has evolved, growing into a city brimming with entrepreneurs and a diversified economy. Tourism has become a major driving component of the town's economy and lifestyle. Main Street is lined with successful small businesses and shops. Other industry -- Insteel Industries Inc.,

Once the automobile came on the scene, particularly the mass-produced Model T, Mount Airy became a busy town with visitors from all around the region driving in to conduct business.

Renfro Brands and Nester Hosiery Inc. have grown out of the legacy textile history; and several metal outbuilding and carport firms have become major forces in the local economy. Northern Regional Hospital has grown into a multi-award-winning community hospital while taking on a greater role as a regional medical facility and large employer.

Even Amazon has taken note of the community, announcing it will build a distribution center just outside of Mount Airy, with plans to be up and running by the end of 2025, signifying Mount Airy is well positioned for continued cultural and economic growth.

The Liberty Tobacco Warehouse first opened its doors on Sept. 16, 1946, and was one of several such warehouses in Mount Airy, when tobacco farming was a major part of the local economy.

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Mount Airy
the land of festivals!

Main Street in Mount Airy, along with a few side streets, are usually a teeming mass of shoppers and booth workers throughout the three-day Autumn Leaves Festival each year.

JOHN PETERS | jpeters@mtairynews.com

Mount Airy and Surry County are known for many things -- the hometown of Andy Griffith and inspiration for Mayberry; the massive Autumn Leaves Festival; and one of the nation's more influential regions on bluegrass and old time music -- not to mention its proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, Pilot Mountain State Park and plenty of outdoor opportunities.

Mount Airy might just as well be call the City of Festivals.

That's because the town has a calendar chocked full of major events, often drawing tens of thousands -- and occasionally more -- to the festivities.

AUTUMN LEAVES

Of course, the Big Kahuna of festivals is the annual Autumn Leaves Festival, held the second full weekend of October.

Every county and town has a fair or festival their local officials believe is big, and many are, but few can outpace Mount Airy's Autumn Leaves Festival, affectionately known as ALF. In a town of just 10,600, the population swells to a reported 200,000 or more during the three-day extravaganza.

The event began way back in 1966, more than half a century ago, as a means to celebrate the autumn harvest in what was then primarily an agricultural community.

The booths and displays stayed close to that theme.

The Sugarloaf Mountain Band was one of nearly three dozen bands performing live during the 2019 Autumn Leaves Festival. Every year the event is punctuated by 35 to 40 local bands performing live.

Among the features in those early days was a booth where apple butter was made the old-timey way, with a gigantic vat of autumn butter being stirred for all to see; live displays on quilting and other rural farm crafts, and even a chance to milk a cow.

"Some fellow from Greensboro" came all the way to Mount Airy – three times – just to see a cow milked, the late Dr. Dale Simmons said in 2016, when he was being honored for helping to start the festival 50 years earlier. Simmons recalled how the cow had been dry on the determined man's first two visits to the festival, but the third time was a charm.

Milking a cow on Main Street, "that just tells you a little of what we were doing," in the early days of Autumn Leaves, he said, and how there was a widespread interest to see those kinds of things.

These days there are more than 200 booths set up — most occupied by top-notch handcrafters, artists, and a wide variety of novelty or specialty items on display. Generally there are about 25 different food vendors, featuring local favorites such as the ground steak sandwich or collared green sandwiches, to tropical fruit drinks and standard festival fare (hot dogs, sausage dogs, funnel cakes, cotton candy, BBQ plates and more). Most years between 35 and 40 bands play during the event — all local groups who have a personal connection to the old-time music so prevalent in the region's history.

The gathering, routine ranked among as a Top 20 Event in the Southeast by the Southeast Tourism Society, is managed by the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce. Over the decades, the chamber and original organizers have entrusted the festival to a handful of individual festival directors who oversee the annual gathering.

One of those was Travis Frye. While he works as tourism coordinator for both the Dobson Dobson Tourism Authority and the Surry County Tourism Authority now, he served for several years as ALF coordinator while working with the chamber.

Several years ago he put his finger on one reason the

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Autumn Leaves Festival remains popular.

"We stay true to roots," he said during a 2019 interview. "The main thing we talk about is a sense of community. Although it's run by the chamber of commerce, we always want to include the community."

Even more evocative of those first festivals is the music available at the three-day gathering.

"All the music you hear is from locals," he said at the time. "We don't hire any outside big, elaborate bands … we try to stick to the roots of bluegrass and old time string music. We try to stick to those roots because we have so many great musicians."

Today, years after his remarks, that is still true, with old time, bluegrass, and gospel music bands from the region performing live throughout the three-day event.

For more information on Autumn Leaves Festival, visit http://www.autumnleavesfestival.com/

MAYBERRY DAYS

While Autumn Leaves may be the largest event in Mount Airy, in terms of the number of people descending on the city, Mayberry Days could very well be the best-known.

Mayberry Days, a gathering of thousands — sometimes tens of thousands — fans of "The Andy Griffith Show," takes place every September, with concerts, talks about the show and its enduring effect on people, along with appearances and performances by remaining cast members.

Founded in 1990 by the Surry Arts Council and its executive director, Tanya Jones, to mark the 30th anniversary of "The Andy Griffith Show's" network premiere, Mayberry Days was originally Mayberry Day, a one-off festival meant solely to commemorate the anniversary. Jones has said on many occasions there was no thought given to a second Mayberry Day, until people started calling, wanting to know what would be featured in 1991's version.

That meant there was a year two, and year three, and soon enough Mount Airy was the home for all things Mayberry. Over the years, the festival has expanded, first to two days, then three, and eventually to its present incarnation, a full week of shows, concerts, and related activities.

"People love learning more about 'The Andy Griffith Show' and meeting people involved with the show, but more than that, they like participating in activities that make them feel like they've stepped into Mayberry, as if they're experiencing the culture of the show," Tanya Jones said of the festival's still-growing popularity.

Karen Knotts, daughter of Don Knotts, waves to the crowd during the Mayberry Days parade in 2023. She is a regular guest and a fan favorite at the annual Mayberry Days festival.

Highlights are the official Mayor's Proclamation, which occurs Friday morning of the event, a golf tournament named The Emmett, after Griffith's long-time local friend and supporter of the arts council, Emmett Forrest, and a Saturday parade focusing on the show's cast members and related guests attending the event.

There are also trivia contests, Mayberry-related games and displays, and the list of activities could go on and on. The event has grown so popular it has many times been named one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast by the Southeast Tourism Society. It has spun off similar fairs — the former Mayberry in the Midwest, the present Memories of Mayberry in Alabama and similar gatherings, throughout the South, and even a Mayberry-themed cruise each autumn.

For more information on Mayberry Days, visit https://www.surryarts.org/mayberrydays/

BLUE GRASS AND OLD-TIME FIDDLERS CONVENTION

Much of the old-time and bluegrass music enjoyed the world over has its roots in Surry County, and that heritage is celebrated every year with the annual Mount Airy Blue Grass and Old-Time Fiddlers Convention.

It might not be the oldest of the old-time music festivals, nor the largest, but it comes pretty close on both.

Generally held the first full weekend in June, the festival officially consists of two full days of competition,

jam sessions, dancing, singing, education, and family entertainment.

Truth is, the first of the fans and musicians start showing up days before the official event, pitching their tent or parking their camper at Veterans Memorial Park in Mount Airy, where the festival is held. By week's end, hundreds of campers and tents are flung across the grounds — and most of the local hotel rooms are filled — by musicians and big-time fans.

In addition to the official competition and performances, jam sessions break out all across the grounds, sometimes featuring groups of musicians who have never played together -- maybe never seen each other -- before pulling up a chair or sitting on a nearby bench to form an little impromptu concert or jam session.

Many of those attending are regulars, some traveling five or ten miles, other traveling hundreds of miles to attend what they often describe as a musical family reunion.

Even among first timers, the sense of camaraderie takes hold fast, making strangers into quick friends. "We'll be back," is the oft-repeated refrain from those taking in their first blue grass and old-time festival.

One of the attractions — in addition to the friendship and musical performances — are the free old-time and bluegrass workshops scheduled during the week.

The Surry Arts Council works to bring in many of the old masters of music, as well as rising stars, to give workshops in a variety of disciplines, including fiddle, banjo, vocals, guitar, jams, dance, and more.

Camping is available by the day or week for full hook-up, water/electric only, and primitive camping. Advance reservations must be for the full week.

While these represent three of the large, long-time festivals that call Mount Airy home, there are plenty of others.

For more information on the festival, visit https://www.surryarts.org/mafiddlersconvention/

WINE AND CRAFT BEER BUDBREAK FESTIVAL

That's right, the hometown of Andy Griffith, the real-life Mayberry, holds a craft beer and wine festival each spring, and it's a doozie.

Timed for early May each spring, the festival occurs just about the time the grape vine buds break pen -- thus the festival original name, Budbreak.

Wineries and vineyards have become a major part of the local and regional agricultural economy, with more than a dozen of each dotting surrounding countryside, producing award-winning wines which rival some of the best vintages in the nation.

That is celebrated each year with the annual budbreak festival, held in downtown Mount Airy. Many of those area wineries, as well as others from neighboring regions and local craft breweries set up shop in downtown, so those attending the festival can sample the local goods.

The festival also includes plenty of live music, a few wine-flavored concoctions for sale (wine slushies are insanely popular during the fest), and occasionally some dancers or other performers from nearby fairs or gatherings will put in an appearance, offering some live entertainment.

For more information on the budbreak festival, visit https://budbreakfestival.com/

MOONSHINE & RACER'S REUNION

Every spring, old time racers — and a few still active in the sport — descend on Mount Airy for a day-long display featuring race cars from all eras, and drivers who made NASCAR and Southern racing what it is today.

In a nod to racing's roots — old moonshiners trying to outrun revenue agents — many of the hot rods on display are equipped with stories, displays, and artifacts from those bygone days of running illegal whiskey through the rural hollows to their eventual destination.

Racing cars and moonshine transporters from the early part of the 20th century are on display, along with race cars of all sizes and types. Among those cars are smaller autos that were run at local dirt tracks, all the way up to a few that were racing on NASCAR's biggest stage, the former Winston-Cup series.

Every once in a while one of the racers will crank up a car, filling downtown Mount Airy with a thunderous roar echoing between the downtown buildings before fading off into the surrounding valleys.

And yes, in addition to the various racing vehicles, there are plenty of drivers and crew chiefs on hand, signing autographs and telling stories.

TOMMY JARRELL FESTIVAL

While the June old-time music and blue grass festival is

Rob Smith of Southern Charm Winery in Lincolnton provides wine samples to a group of people at Saturday's Wine and Craft Beer Budbreak Festival, with a long line of people trailing off in the distance, waiting for their turn during the annual budbreak festival.

a celebration of an entire genre of music, this gathering is commemorate one of the giants in that field, Surry County native and old-time music pioneer Tommy Jarrell.

The local musician passed away more than four decades ago — on Jan. 28, 1985. Yet, his musical legacy lives on — and the Surry Arts Council helps keep his memory alive with its annual Tommy Jarrell Festival, set for the weekend closest to March 1, the anniversary of his 1901 birth.

Jarrell was instrumental in developing the distinctive Round Peak style of banjo playing, a style musicians the world over have come to Surry County to learn.

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Each year, the festival brings musicians and fans to Mount Airy for the day-long event. Many of the activities are scheduled at the Old-Time Music Heritage Hall at the Historic Earle Theatre, where an exhibit hall features displays on Jarrell along with other Surry County old-time music icons.

The day-long festival includes concerts — generally two hours of live concerts broadcast on WPAQ's landmark Merry-Go-Round, then a closing concert at the end of the day that features local award-winning bands and plenty of flat-footing for anyone who wants to take to the dance floor.

In between there are workshops galore — free banjo lessons, many times taught by Wayner Erbsen, who studied under Tommy Jarrell and other well-known masters of the genre; along with other workshops and a youth competition.

For more information on the Tommy Jarrell Festival, visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/tommyjarrell.html

SURRY COUNTY SONKER FESTIVAL

No list of celebration events in Mount Airy can exist without mention of the annual Sonker Festival held each October by the Surry County Historical Society at the Edwards-Franklin House, a structure built in 1799 which is located at 4132 Haystack Road west of Mount Airy.

The Sonker Festival celebrates a type of deep-dish fruit dessert that originated in the area. As is the case with so many local fairs and gatherings, the event generally features live and old-time bluegrass music, pottery and other craft displays— but the main attraction always is the coveted dessert for which it's named.

While a sonker may take on different forms and flavors, the ones featured at the annual festival usually includes sweet potato, peach, strawberry, cherry and blueberry.

An hour or two at the festival is often a relaxing way to get away from the high-tech, often busy world. Attendees always are urged to bring lawn chairs to the festival and sit in the yard of the Edwards-Franklin House to munch away while listening to music, with space for flatfoot dancing also provided.

Some of the displays and demonstrations part of the festival most years include quilters, basketry, a pottery display, an exhibit featuring 18th- and 19th-century artifacts and more.

Tours of the more than two-hundred-year-old house are often part of the day.

For more information on the festival, visit https://sonkertrail.org/sonker-festival

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Tasters enjoy samples of homemade soups at the annual Great American Soup Off at Coley Hall at The Liberty in downtown Elkin.

A festival for every season *in Elkin*

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON | kburns@yadkinripple.com

In Elkin there are numerous events and festivals held throughout the year that celebrate the seasons and the community. From holiday gatherings to the annual Trail Days Festival, the Yadkin Valley Wine Festival and so many more, there is something for everyone to enjoy and celebrate in downtown Elkin.

WINTER

The holiday season is celebrated every December in downtown Elkin with the annual Light Up Elkin Night event, held the first Friday in December. This gathering includes a tree-lighting ceremony, decorated store front windows, live music and specials at all the downtown shops on Main St. Much of the street is also blocked off so kids and families can enjoy hay-rides and even a ride on a miniature train.

The annual Yadkin Valley Christmas Parade is another December tradition that is shared between Elkin and the neighboring town of Jonesville. School sports teams, churches, fire trucks and other emergency personnel parade through the streets of both towns, tossing candy to children watching from the sidewalks.

The winter fun continues in February in Elkin with the annual Great American Soup Off, a soup making competition benefiting a local charity, in which community

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

A live nativity scene outside the Reeves Downtown Music School on Light Up Elkin night.

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Carolers sing on Main Street in downtown Elkin during the annual Light Up Elkin night.

members can sample and vote on the winners. This event is held each year in conjunction with the BrrrFest at Angry Troll Brewing and features beer tastings from several local breweries.

SPRING

The annual Yadkin Valley Wine Festival is a highly anticipated and much-beloved event in Elkin. Held the third weekend in May at Elkin Municipal Park, this festival is a celebration of the best wineries in the region. Wine lovers can enjoy tastings from more than a dozen area vineyards as well as live music, and food and craft vendors.

SUMMER

The NC Trail Days Festival kicks off the summer season in Elkin, with an event celebrating the natural wonders of

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Williamson Mead and Brewing pours samples at Brrrfest in Coley Hall at The Liberty in Elkin.

COURTESY PHOTO

A festive float of Elves and friends in the 2024 Yadkin Valley Christmas Parade.

the region. This event, typically held the first weekend in June, brings together hikers, bikers and paddlers to enjoy all the trails and waterways in the area. The weekend-long festival includes numerous guided hikes at various local venues, special meals, a downtown block party and much more.

A newer event in Elkin, hosted by community group Bridge of Unity, is held near June 15 to celebrate Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, when the final enslaved people in the country were told of their freedom. This event is a family-friendly festival with great live music, plenty of food and craft vendors and a BBQ cook-off. Guests can enjoy tastings from all the BBQ competitors,

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KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Kids in America performs at the 2024 Yadkin Valley Wine Festival.

who begin early in the day preparing smoked whole-hog BBQ, and vote on their favorites.

Freedom Fest, an event celebrating the July 4 holiday, takes place each July, typically the Friday before the holiday at Elkin Municipal Park with live music, food and craft vendors and an evening fireworks display.

FALL

The Great Pumpkins are the star of the show for Elkin's annual Yadkin Valley Pumpkin Festival, held each year the fourth Saturday in September. The event is an official weigh-in competition for giant pumpkins and other gourds. The weigh-in begins early in the day at the Trails

BRIDGE OF UNITY

Buffy Welborn checks on his barbecue during a cook-off competition at the Bridge of Unity Juneteenth Festival.

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KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

The Elkin Valley Trails Association at the vendor fair during the 2024 NC Trail Days Festival.

and Heritage Center but the festival takes over the whole town. Main Street is blocked off for the day with booths all up and down the street selling food, jewelry, crafts, clothing and more.

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Competitors line up their giant pumpkins to compete in the weight-off at the 2023 Yadkin Valley Pumpkin Festival. This year's festival is planned for Saturday, Sept. 28.

History of the town of Elkin

HISTORY COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ELKIN

The confluence of the Yadkin River and the Big Elkin Creek has drawn people to the area of what is now Elkin, since the coming of the Paleo-Indians 12,000 years ago.

Historians also know that the Sioux Indians settled along the Yadkin River as early as 500 BC. Early settlers came to the area in the 1700s and English colonists soon after. Cherokee Indians were also living in the area, and although the Cherokee had been active in the French and Indian War, they had joined in treaties with the English in 1763, followed by the events of the American Revolution.

The town's early history centers on one man and his descendants. Around 1840, Richard Gwyn left Jonesville to settle on the north side of the Yadkin River, recognizing the value of the forested hills and waterpower of Elkin Creek. Within a decade he and several family members established Elkin Manufacturing Company.

Further up Elkin Creek, Alexander Chatham and Thomas Lenoir Gwyn opened a small woolen mill in 1877 that grew to become Elkin's largest industry today.

The Northwestern North Carolina Railroad arrived in 1890; the town was ready to take the opportunities the railroad brought for commercial and industrial expansion. Its strategic location near the Yadkin River and the Big Elkin Creek and as a stop on the railroad brought a level of prosperity that produced brick stores, many industries, and fine houses.

The flow of the two rivers through the community were vital components of the development of Elkin.

First, the rivers provided water and means for fishing and travel. Also, using waterpower to drive gristmills, forges, and sawmills was an important economic development.

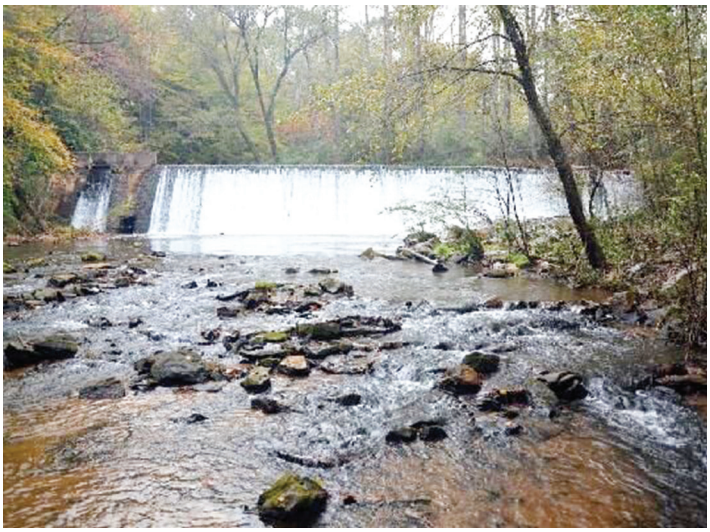
The greatest impact was the more sophisticated mills along the rivers that powered shoe and textile factories. Elkin has a proud history and a bright future as seen in its historic downtown, where past landmarks are now being revitalized.

COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ELKIN

Richard Gwyn Museum.

COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ELKIN

Undated photo of West Main Street in downtown Elkin.



COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF ELKIN

Elkin's Shoe Factory Dam can be viewed along the town's beautiful Elkin and Alleghany RR trails system along the Big Elkin Creek, starting in the Elkin Municipal Park.

KITSEY BURNS HARRISON

Katiey Swaim gives an 18th-century cooking demonstration to area fourth-graders during a special history day program at Elkin Municipal Park.

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FILE PHOTO

The historic Chatham Mill.

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Dobson retains its roots while charting future course

RYAN KELLY | ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com

Nestled in the heart of Surry County is the town of Dobson, which serves as the county seat. Founded in 1850, the town came to be as the result of the geographic division of Surry County by the North Carolina General Assembly, according to the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History.

In 1851, when Surry County was split to form Yadkin County, the county was directed to relocate the courthouse to a central location and Dobson was chosen. Therefore, fifty acres of land were bought and the courthouse erected.

The Historic Courthouse in downtown Dobson today houses members of the county administration and is the site where public meetings of the Surry County Board of Commissioners are held. It had been used as a courthouse until the turn of this century and the construction of a new judicial center nearby.

There is some debate about what the origin of the town name is according to Jonathan Martin, who wrote for the North Carolina History Project. "Historians contend that the seat of government, Dobson, received its name from two sources as well. Some believe that Dobson was either named in honor of William P. Dobson, a representative who served in the General Assembly in the 1810s, or William Dobson, a justice of the peace who served during the Revolutionary Era."

The Town of Dobson offers limited clarification in its own documents: "The name 'Dobson' was derived from a family who was prominent in Rockford and Surry County since the pre-Revolutionary days."

A small community of around 1,500 residents describe themselves as, "A welcoming neighbor of the Blue Ridge Mountains, marking the trailhead to convenient recreational living."

"Nestled in the foothills of the Yadkin Valley Wine Region, Dobson boasts a fruitful collection of farm-to-table experiences blended with family-centered entertainment, arts, and culture. Locally sourced small shops are the heartbeat of the community, where opportunity is homegrown."

Rockford General Store, which was built circa 1890, is seen in this file photo. The village of Rockford has preserved many buildings with historic significance and houses a stop on the Civil War Trail.

Town leaders are charting the future of Dobson, and a recent long-term development plan took in comments and suggestions from members of the community to discover what they want to see in a future Dobson.

Its centralized location as the county seat along with the county's courthouse means that people are driving in and out of town every day. Part of the town's long term plan is to attract more businesses into the downtown area where some real estate is available. As more, and different, types of businesses and eateries are developed it is thought that more people may seek to live in proximity to the

downtown business district.

One of the premiere industries in modern Surry County is tourism and Dobson is no exception to the rule, boasting one of the state's best known wineries.

Founded by brothers Charlie and Ed Shelton in 1999, Shelton Vineyards was one of several businesses they founded including home builder Fortis Homes. Before devoting their full energy to Shelton Vineyards, the brothers sold their construction company to a group of employees in 2004.

The brothers are widely credited for laying the foundation of the modern viticulture industry in the Yadkin Valley. Viticulture, from the Latin vitis cultura or vine-growing, is the study of the cultivation of grapes and methodology behind their harvesting and production into wine.

The Yadkin Valley AVA was founded in 2003 after the Shelton brothers petitioned for status as an American Viticultural Area. No one has ever thought, "Let me ask the United States Department of Treasury for information on wine." However, they provided clarity on AVA status all the same as, "A grape-growing region with specific geographic or climatic features that distinguish it from the surrounding regions and affect how grapes are grown."

According to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, "Yadkin Valley holds the distinction of being North Carolina's first AVA. Moderate elevations and proximity to the Yadkin River allow a variety of grapes to thrive in this area that's now home to dozens of wineries."

There are more than two dozen wineries in the Yadkin Valley AVA, with Shelton Vineyards just a stone's throw from downtown Dobson. Their wines have been winning awards for many years now including their 2019 Reserve Cabernet Franc, which was a big winner at the 2024 North Carolina Wine Competition; Shelton had over 20 medal winning wines in the competition.

Not wanting to be left off the accolade list is the vineyard's on-site restaurant Harvest Grill which was named as one of Yelp's Top 100 U.S. restaurants list for 2022. They were one of only two North Carolina restaurants to make the list and have also been recognized with Three Diamonds from the American Automotive Association (AAA).

Dobson is also home to one of Surry County's largest employers, Wayne Sanderson Farms, which is the nation's third largest poultry producer. Their production facility on West Atkins Street employs a large number of county residents and brings in workers in from neighboring counties and Virginia as well in search of secure jobs that pay well.

One of the region's learning centers is found in Dobson as the town serves as home to Surry Community College which opened its doors in 1964. The college serves nearly

TOWN OF DOBSON

Dobson Town Manager Jeff Sedlacek has said that Dobson Square Park's splash pad is a one-of-a-kind water feature in Surry County that brings people to the downtown.

4,000 students from across the region to pursue a variety of degree and certification programs. There are also four satellite campuses of the community college found in Mount Airy, Elkin, Pilot Mountain, and Yadkinville.

The college also serves thousands of high school students each year in classes offered through their

SURRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A student is seen in this image from Surry Community College. Founded in 1964, SCC serves thousands of students in degree program and college transfer programs as well as scores of high school students taking career training classes.

TOM JOYCE

Folks side under a shade tree while listening to live music played from the porch of the Edwards-Franklin House during a recent Sonker Festival.

Workforce, Technology, and Community Education Division. SCC said students enrolled in these classes receive, "A variety of learning opportunities, from workforce-related training to classes for personal enrichment."

Dobson prides itself on providing proximal recreational opportunities to residents in the form of green spaces, parks, and access points to the Yadkin River for those who enjoy time on the water.

One of Surry County's premiere public parks, Fisher River Park, is found just outside the downtown and hosts a number of fields for baseball, softball, or soccer, a horse arena, as well as walking trails and a mountain bike trail. The park is a frequent destination for regional sporting competitions having played host to the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's Division 2A Midwest Regional cross country meet

When the weather is right, Dobson Square Park in downtown is a destination for residents who may want to take advantage of the area's only splash pad. The park features walking trails, picnic shelter, and covered stage where live music can be found. The park hosts some of the town's annual functions like the Spring Folly, Spooktacular, and movies in the park.

There are also long term plans to connect Dobson to Mount Airy and other green spaces throughout the county via greenway or bike trail. The Surry Scenic Bikeway has hundreds of miles of bike trails including a nearly 60 mile loop connecting Dobson to Elkin while mirroring at times the flow of the Yadkin River.

History buffs may enjoy a trip to the Historic Village of Rockford which was once the county seat of Surry County. In the village there are a number of historic buildings which are maintained thanks to the efforts of local preservationists, families, and businessowners in Rockford.

The Rockford General Store was built in the 1890s and has been in operation ever since having had only a handful of owners since that time.

The former Rockford Courthouse, built in 1830, was purchased by the county a few years ago with the intent to restore the building.

RYAN KELLY

Vance and Mary Jo Patterson (center) of Foundation Forward Inc. pose with guests at the dedication ceremony of the Charters of Freedom display on the grounds of the Historic Courthouse in downtown Dobson.

Vice Chair of the Surry County Board of Commissioners Bill Goins said at the time, "The county staff is already engaged and working closely with a restoration specialist from the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' State Historic Preservation Office to develop a plan and use for the building and property going forward."

"It is the county's primary intent to return use of this property to the citizens of Surry County in some capacity as we move forward in developing a plan for the property," he explained.

A Civil War Trail marker is found near the site of York Tavern in the Village of Rockford; it is one of three designated civil war sites in Surry County.

During the United States Civil War, Union General George Stoneman lead a raid of troops from the mountains to the east in a move researcher at NC State University said was meant to damage railways with the goal, "To cripple Confederate motivation during the latter part of the Civil War... Unlike the other areas touched by (Stoneman's) raid, Surry escaped without major damage and devastation, despite the animosity between the raiders and local civilians."

"The events of the raid within Surry County are even less well known in the overall scheme of the war," the team from NC State wrote. "A close investigation reveals that as compared with the areas prior to and after it, Surry

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RYAN KELLY

Arts and crafts vendors, businesses, and food trucks took over S. Crutchfield Street for the annual Spooktacular.

fared well."

The Mount Airy News in 1918 wrote of the raid, "No one in this county thought that the war would come within the confines of our own immediate section... But one Sunday afternoon in 1865 while all the able bodied men were in the army and only they and children with the aged and infirm were left, a band of cavalry, estimated at from two to ten thousand, led by the federal Gen. Geo. M. Stoneman. rode into Mount Airy and camped for the night."

Federal troops helped themselves to what they needed, the scholars said. "Local tradition contains many stories about the raiders in Dobson. In one case, the federal troops dumped a wagonload of silver goods into the Fisher River because they needed the wagon itself. It was said that residents pulled tableware out of the river for a number of years following the incident."

In another incident, the troops happened upon large stores of brandy belonging to Enoch Creed and made a decision to scuttle the supply. "Some of them filled their canteens, and realizing that if they all got into it the whole army would get drunk, they burst the barrels. The brandy would not soak in a solid rock and it is said that it was knee-deep in the cellar for several days," the newspaper stated.

The research team from NC State concluded, "The county was not completely devastated or ravaged by the raiders, and most of the little infrastructure it had was left intact. This is most likely due to the fact that Surry had few sites of significance to the Confederate cause, and that the people of Surry County seemed to want nothing more than to be left alone."

CORY SMITH

Millennium Charter's Joseph Streeter, left, and Mannix Pettry compete in a meet at Fisher River Park in 2023. The park hosts field for baseball, softball, and soccer as well as mountain bike trails and a disc golf course.

Another historic site of note is the nearby Edwards-Franklin House built by Gideon Edwards and later occupied by his son-in-law, Meshack Franklin who was a congressional representative from North Carolina. The home is found on the National Registry of Historic Places.

The 1973 application for placement on the registry reads in part, "The Franklin House is a handsome Georgian-

Federal dwelling retaining a remarkable amount of is original fabric, including fine paneling through the house with interesting marbleizing and wood graining. It is by far the most ambitious early house in Surry County. The significance of the house is further enhanced by its association with Jesse Franklin, son of the builder, who is said to have selected the land for his father's new home. This is the only extant reminder of the state's twentieth governor... who was Surry County's most outstanding historical figure."

Dobson is making its own mark on history today with the new North Carolina Ground Steak Festival, a sibling to the Surry County Ground Steak Trail, which honors one of the areas' signature foodstuffs. Also, the Surry County Sonker Trail recognizes the little dessert that could that looks and acts like a cobbler but is not. It was found among entries of a cookbook belonging to Martha Washington who credited it to one of her Scots Irish cooks.

RYAN KELLY
Young people at the Dobson Spring Folly are seen spinning furiously on one of the many carnival rides.

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Highland Games among *Dobson attractions*

TOM JOYCE | tjoyce@mtairynews.com

DOBSON – When officials in Dobson began entertaining new ways to engage the public, they turned to the Old Country for inspiration.

This led to plans for the town's first-ever Highland Games event, continuing locally a Scottish tradition begun in the 11th century.

The Fisher River Highland Games of 2025 are scheduled for May 10 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Fisher River Park just outside town.

Such events have been held elsewhere in North Carolina and Virginia, featuring exciting "heavy athletics" competition such as caber (large log) tossing, hammer throwing, tugs of war and other activities celebrating the Scottish culture and legacy.

The event at Dobson will boast the added attraction of free admission to the public for its inaugural year.

INCREASING VERSATILITY

Recognizing the Scotch-Irish ancestry of many folks in this region, Fisher River Highland Games was a natural addition to the array of annual events already hosted by Dobson.

Among these are ground steak and food truck festivals, spring and Halloween celebrations, various musical events and more.

"Our goal is to bring people into Dobson to discover what makes us unique and very versatile," explained Travis Frye, tourism coordinator for Surry County and the town of Dobson.

"You've got to do something that's different," he said in reference to launching the Scottish-themed event.

ADOBESTOCK IMAGE

Highland Games events typically are filled with color, pageantry and a few bagpipes, which will be the case during Dobson's inaugural foray into the genre on May 10.

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JOHN PETERS

Steve Heath, with his wife, Susan, to the left, wait for a ground steak sandwich from the Flat Rock Ruritan food booth during the 2024 Ground Steak Festival. The couple, from King, are just a couple of the hundreds of individuals from surrounding counties to make their way to Dobson for the festival each year.

HIGHLAND GAMES

Dobson will be filling a void where the first Fisher River Highland Games are concerned.

While such gatherings of the clans are popular among the public and have been staged previously in venues including Winston-Salem and Ararat, Virginia, those events have been phased out, Frye advised.

"Grandfather Mountain and Lake Norman are the two closest to this area," he said. "You have to drive an hour or an hour and a half to see the games."

The upcoming event at Dobson will involve a trip here instead.

"We've actually got the professionals from Lake Norman to come," Frye explained.

In addition to the heavy athletics, the Fisher River Highland Games will include Celtic music; a gathering of the clans, or families, showcasing Scottish surnames and their history; and craft vendors.

SPRING FOLLY

The Fisher River Highland Games won't be the only game in town when it comes to springtime activities in Dobson.

There is also the annual Spring Folly, which has been held in April since 2012 to celebrate the season.

JOHN PETERS

Music seems to be part of many of the festivals and fairs held in Dobson each year. Here, Mount Airy-based The Country Boys was one of many local bands taking a turn entertaining the crowd during the 2024 Ground Steak Festival.

First staged in 2015, its 2025 version will roll out with another two-schedule on April 11-12, a Friday and Saturday, at Dobson Square Park in the center of town.

During the day-long festival on both dates, the park will be filled with 10 or more carnival rides, food trucks, craft vendors and inflatables.

"We have actually added a musical element this year, which is cool," Frye said.

FOOD TRUCKS GALORE

Also on tap this spring is the third-annual Surry County Food Truck Rodeo, slated for May 3 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Dobson Farmers Market on East Atkins Street.

This event offers attendees the opportunity to partake of culinary delights they might not encounter otherwise.

Oyster burgers, alligator on a stick and maple bourbon turkey burgers have been among offerings in the past.

Music by two bands, Thunder Rose and the Motown Legacy Review, will spice up the occasion.

"We've got eight food trucks as well to roll out," Frye added.

GROUND STEAK, ANYONE?

Another Dobson-based event that has proven popular is the annual North Carolina Ground Steak Festival, planned this year for June 14 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

FILE PHOTO

Alden and Arnold Nunn of The Nunn Brothers bluegrass group have been among featured performers at Dobson's Music at the Market series.

It will occupy the historic courthouse square downtown, while honoring the namesake dish.

Ground streak is a loose-meat, melt-in-your mouth cousin to the hamburger which was born in homes, diners and burger joints of Surry County during the Great

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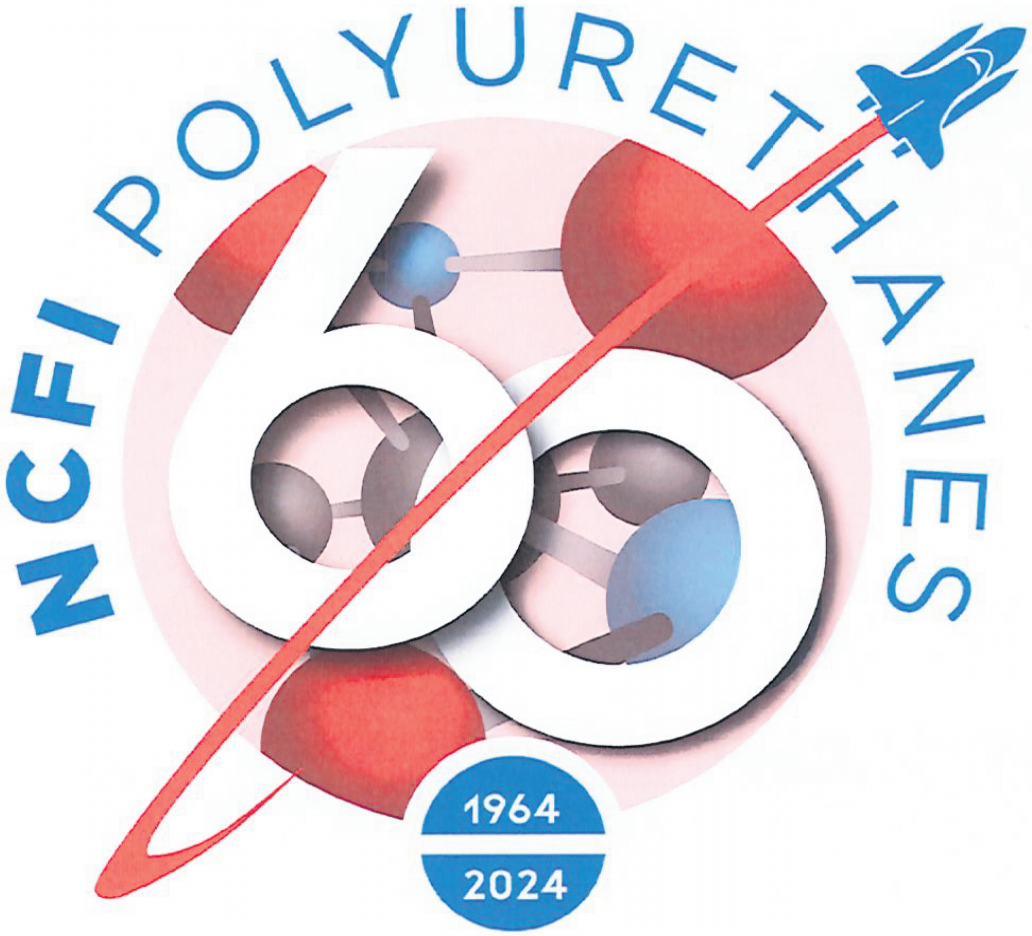

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Depression.

Central Cafe in Dobson will dish out ground steak sandwiches along with the Flat Rock Ruritan Club, which achieved fame for serving those treats at the annual Autumn Leaves Festival in Mount Airy.

Bluegrass and old-time music, more than 75 artisans and crafters and children's activities also will be featured at the festival.

It was first held in 2023.

A MARKET FOR MUSIC

• Live music will be featured in other ways at Dobson events throughout the year, including Rock the Block.

Rock the Block debuted in 2023 and is scheduled this year on Sept. 13 from 5 to 9 p.m. at Dobson Square Park.

Too Much Sylvia will be the featured act, performing from the park amphitheater.

The consumption of alcohol is allowed in a restricted beer and wine garden on the grounds.

Food trucks will be on hand, also.

• The popular Music on the Market concert series is tuning up for another year of performances by various bluegrass and old-time groups.

It's a free outdoor event at Dobson Farmers Market on East Atkins with six different Fridays booked for the series during July and August.

Music fans are invited to come equipped with lawn chairs for the event also to include food trucks.

Those outlets will begin serving at 6 p.m. each concert day, with the performances slated from 7 to 9 p.m.

"Generally, we've been seeing about 200 people," Frye said.

Music at the Market dates include July 11 and 18 and Aug. 1, 8, 15 and 29.

FREE MOVIES

For those who enjoy big-screen entertainment, Dobson Square Park again will host the Movie Night at the Park series.

It also is free to the public.

Attendees can bring chairs and blankets and spread out over the grounds to enjoy recent releases.

Movie dates this year are May 16, June 20, July 18, Aug. 15 and Sept. 19.

TOM JOYCE

Dobson celebrates Halloween through its annual Spooktacular.

DOBSON SPOOKTACULAR

Last but by no means least on the Surry County town's calendar is its annual event celebrating Halloween.

"It's always the last Saturday in October," Frye said, which this year falls on Oct. 25.

The Spooktacular is scheduled in Dobson Square Park from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

It typically features carnival rides, food trucks, and craft vendors, with unlimited-ride wristbands available.

And, of course, many attendees tend to show up in Halloween costumes that boost the spirit of the occasion.

TOM JOYCE

Diners enjoy unique fare during the Surry County Food Truck Rodeo in Dobson.

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From pre-K to college, Surry educational opportunities abound

Surry County has three separate public school systems — Mount Airy City Schools, Surry County Schools, and Elkin City Schools, along with Millennium Charter Academy in Mount Airy.

The school systems are consistently ranked among the top in the state in a number of categories, including standardized testing, graduation rates, and other measures showing how successful the schools are in teaching and in helping students transition into post-secondary education or into the workforce.

In addition to traditional learning strategies, local schools have a number of summer enrichment camps and activities, keeping students engaged and learning. A number of programs in both Mount Airy and Surry County have been used as models or studies for other school systems across the state to emulate.

In Mount Airy, Dr. Phillip Brown serves as superintendent of the 1,700-student system. serving under a seven-member elected school board. The school district also has a thriving series of summer camps, workshops, and other activities to keep students engaged with learning when schools are closed during those summer months.

More information on the school system and its leadership and https://www.mtairy.k12. nc.us/

In addition to its academic excellence, Mount Airy High School has seen exemplary success on the athletic field, with a number of state and regional champions. Among those are the football team, which has won the past two 1A state titles; the girls tennis team, which has won three consecutive state titles and six state crowns over the past 13 seasons; and many other titles in different sports.

Surry County Schools is the largest of the school systems in the county, with nearly 7,300 students, under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Travis Reeves and a five-member school board. Surry County Schools have also excelled in athletics, with a number or regional and state finalists and champions spread across multiple sports in recent years.

The county school system is home to the Surry Early College High School, a collaborative effort between Surry County Schools and Surry Community College. In this program, students enroll as incoming freshmen, taking both high school and college courses throughout their time in the school. At the end of four years, they are eligible for a high school diploma, and can earn an associate of arts degree with a fifth year of enrollment.

For more information on the Surry County School system visit https://www.surry.k12. nc.us/

Elkin City School, with slightly more than 1,200 students, is helmed by Superintendent Dr. Steve Hall, under a five-member school board.

As is the case with the other school systems in the county, Elkin has experienced both academic and athletic success with its students. On the athletic field, the school system has seen its students claim state and regional titles in swimming, track, tennis, and other sports. For more information on Elkin City Schools visit https://www.elkincityschools.org/

Millennium Charter Academy is an independent public school in Mount Airy serving grades kindergarten through twelve. The school says it "is structured to move forward thoughtfully, purposefully, and quickly, fueled by its mission and vision as embodied by its leadership, staff, and parent body," focusing on a traditional classic education. The school is operated under the leadership of Headmaster Paul Rezzo. For more information, visit https://www.mcacademy.com/

SURRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

With a main campus in Dobson and satellite locations across two counties. Surry Community College serves a dual purpose for area residents.

The two-year school offers an affordable means for students to get two years of college work behind them before transferring on to a four-year university; and Surry Community College continually evolves and adds to a wide array of job training, trades, and professional certificates for those looking to move into the workforce

Surry Community annually serves 3,200 students seeking certificates, diplomas or degrees in a wide range of curriculum programming. The school also serves 18,000 students in more than 1,500 classes through the Workforce, Technology and Community Education Divisions.

SCC's main campus is located in Dobson. The college also operates at different locations in Surry and Yadkin counties, including at the Center for Public Safety in Mount Airy, the Yadkin Center in Yadkinville, the Pilot Center in Pilot Mountain and the Elkin Center in Elkin. These additional locations allow the college to reach a far wider number of people, with everything from college courses to workforce training and even basic computer programs. Two of the college's well-known programs are its Nursing program, based in Dobson, and its truck driving program, based at the Yadkin Center in Yadkinville.

Local high school students are also able to take college courses through Surry and even receive an associate's degree with their high school diploma.

Hugh Chatham meeting needs for nearly 90 years

Born of public need after a small private hospital closed, in the throes of the Great Depression, Hugh Chatham Memorial hospital was born. At the time, Dr. L. B. Abernathy, pastor of the Elkin First Methodist Church, assisted by the western North Carolina Methodist Conference South and the J. B. Duke Endowment, worked with other community leaders to bring a hospital to the community during a time of dire need.

At the time Hugh Gwyn Chatham, president of Chatham Manufacturing Company, was a major benefactor for the project, donating the land that would house the facility. He died on Oct. 10, 1930, before the hospital was opened, and those leading the project chose to name the facility Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital when the new hospital opened on Sunday, April 19, 1931, with its first patients walking through the doors the following day.

While that early facility met a critical community need, those founders and leaders probably had no idea how much those community medical needs might grow, and how the hospital they founded would evolve and grow to meet those needs over the coming nine decades (and counting). Even now, the hospital is changing and growing — it recently changed its name and branding to Hugh Chatham Health to better align with its growing presence in the surrounding community and its expanding ability to offer more varied care options.

Hugh Chatham Health is a not-for-profit community health care network of physician clinics and an 81-bed acute care hospital that delivers healthcare to residents of Elkin, and Surry, Yadkin, and Wilkes counties. Hugh Chatham continues to evolve and grow to meet the changing needs of residents of the Yadkin Valley and Foothills region of North Carolina, and southwestern Virginia. Employing more than 950 people, Hugh Chatham Health includes a medical group of more than 74 providers across 29 locations and six counties. Headquartered in Elkin, Hugh Chatham has been nationally recognized for patient satisfaction, patient safety, and clinical quality.

Among those recognitions are being named as one of America's Best Hospitals for Stroke Care by the Women's Choice Award; the American Heart Association's Gold Plus Get With The Guidelines – Stroke Quality Achievement Award; North Carolina's Best Hospitals for Patient Satisfaction award by Business North Carolina; and America's Best Hospitals for Patient Safety by the Women's Choice Award among its multiple recognitions.

"Our goal is to always provide our patients with the very best healthcare available. As evidence of our commitment to you, Hugh Chatham is accredited by the Joint Commission, which surveys, accredits and certifies healthcare organizations that meet their extremely high standards for care," said Hugh Chatham Health CEO Paul Hammes.

Northern Regional Hospital meeting community needs

Sixty-six years ago, a 98-bed hospital offering basic medical care, maternity wards, and other medical treatment opened in Mount Airy, filling a void left when the former Martin Memorial Hospital was destroyed by a fire.

Today, that facility has grown into the modern Northern Regional Hospital, a 146-bed medical facility, along with an ever-growing network of practices, clinics, and expanded capabilities to serve Mount Airy, Surry County, and portions of Southwest Virginia. The hospital has in recent years focused on expanding not only the number of clinics and ancillary facilities it has in the region to serve area residents, but has grown to offer many services locally that many small towns usually cannot do.

Northern is routinely recognized as one of the strongest community hospitals in the nation by a number of organizations which track hospital success. Among those are being given the Pulmonary Care Excellence Award multiple times by Healthgrades.com; multiple 5-star rating by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS); and multiple "A" ratings from the Leapfrog Group, an agency that monitors and grades hospital safety, results, and effectiveness; the American Heart and Stroke Association's "Target Stroke Gold Plus Elite Honor Roll Award" and "Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll Award;" as well as being chosen as a "Great Community Hospital" by Becker's Hospital Review. Northern's Skilled Care Nursing Center has also achieved a Top 10% national rating in U.S. News & World Report's "Best Nursing Homes" in North Carolina Award.

Recently, the hospital was named one of Becker's 100 Top Rural and Community Hospitals in the country, the only North Carolina facility named to the list..

Among the services offered by Northern and its network of practices are:

Cardiology diagnostic services: These include treadmill and stress tests and other programs to test and monitor cardiac health;

Cardiac Rehabilitation Services: "Cardiac rehabilitation programs typically last about three months and are often covered by your insurance," the hospital said.

Emergency Department: The emergency department at the hospital is open and staffed by doctors and nurses seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"A triage nurse is on duty at all times to assess a patient's condition as they arrive and determine the level of urgency needed for treatment," hospital officials said. "All of our physicians are Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and specially trained for all types of emergencies including cardiac, pediatric, and trauma situations."

The hospital also offers air transport with triage specialization to enable patients to transfer by air when necessary.

Pediatrics: "We provide primary care services for children aged 0 to 18. Our goal is to be more than just your doctor we want to be your partner in providing a personalized healthcare experience and establish a relationship for life," the hospital's website says of its pediatric care services.

Northern Pediatrics is recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as a Patient-Centered Medical Home. According to the NCQA, patients of Patient-Centered practices are more likely to stay healthy, receiver better communiciation from their physician, better manage chronic conditions, and "have a better experience."

Primary Stroke Center: Northern Regional Hospital is certified as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission. This, hospital officials say, "demonstrates the hospital's expertise and commitment to the community in quickly treating stroke patients and providing the highest level of quality treatment and services according to national standards."

Pulmonary Rehabilitation: While there is no cure for chronic lung disease, the staff at Northern Regional, in partnership with Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, offers a team approach to dealing with chronic lung issues. This includes exercise and dietary guidance, education to help manage the condition, and support to reduce stress and stop harmful habits such as smoking. The team includes physicians, clinical exercise specialists, nutritionists, registered nurses, and registered respiratory therapists.

Surgery: The Surgery Center at Northern Regional Hospital is a state-of-the-art facility that includes four integrated digital operating rooms, pre-admission testing, patient prep and holding areas, day surgery, endoscopy, and Northern Regional Hospital has an updated, state-of-the-art MRI scanner.

Other services that make up the wide variety of services at Northern include women's services (birthing center, obstetrics, gynecological procedures); family medicine, gastroenterology; imaging and radiology; intensive care, occupational health services, orthopaedics, otolarynology, skilled nursing care, urgent care, urology, wound care, as well as a full-service wellness and fitness center.

"Our vision is to be the healthcare system of choice for the region," hospital officials say. "Our organization will continually strive to meet these goals guided by our core values of trust, quality, customer service, compassion, commitment and fiscal responsibility."

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