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Museum Trifecta

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Squad Car Tours

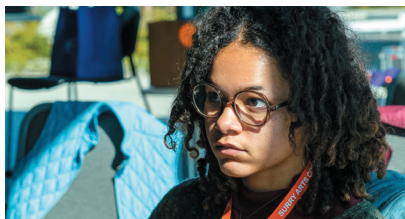
Cruise Mayberry in style

Ukuleles in Mount Airy

Annual convention serenades town

What's happening?

Concerts, shows and more



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ON THE COVER

- A family enjoys a cruise downtown.
- A mockup of the marquee of the Earle Theatre houses a touchscreen where clips from several Andy Griffith movies can be seen.
- Art Easter, of Mount Airy, listens intently during one of the ukulele sessions.
- A replica wagon is found in the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History.



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A museum tour?

While outdoor activities might slack off just a bit during the late autumn and winter months, there's more than a day's worth of activities in the Mayberry Museum Tour -- a chance to learn about Andy Griffith's life and career; the opportunity to learn about the world-famous Siamese Twins; and the chance to delve into the long, fascinating development of the real-life Mayberry, Mount Airy.

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Squad car tours

For any fan of "The Andy Griffith Show," the view of a Ford Galaxy black-and-white squad car is a nostalgic look at the show. Now, visitors to Mount Airy can tour the city and surrounding countryside in one of those very cars, as part of the Mayberry Squad Car Tours

12

Ukuleles in Mount Airy?

When one thinks of the local music scene, the first images coming to mind are old-time mountain musicians, or blue grass artists, maybe some Gospel or even Southern rock. But in recent years, the sounds of...the ukulele have become more common in town. Recently, nearly four dozen ukulele players converged on the city for an annual convention

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More Than You Can Do

If you're in town, or even nearby, there's plenty to do in Mount Airy. Concerts, plays, radio shows...the list is nearly endless. Check out our extensive calendar of events



PHOTOS BY RYAN KELLY

Photographs, press clippings, and even Andy Griffith's old yearbooks can be seen inside the museum that bears his name.

Andy Griffith starred in "A Face in the Crowd" directed by Academy Award winning director Elia Kazan of "On the Waterfront."

Beat winter's chill *by museum-hopping in Mount Airy*

BY RYAN KELLY | ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com

Winter in the foothills means outdoor adventures take a backseat. When temperatures dip and noses start to run, visitors may want to seek out the warmth of Mount Airy's three museums.

In close proximity to each other, with two directly across the street from each other on Rockford Street, and the other a short stroll away on Main Street – the trio prove that you can spend a rich, full day exploring without braving the cold for more than a few minutes at a time.

No matter where one wants to start a day of exploring in Mount Airy, you're within easy walking distance of all three: the Andy Griffith Museum, the Siamese Twins Museum dedicated to Eng and Chang Bunker, and the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. Both the Andy Griffith and Siamese Twins Museum can be bundled in one \$12

combo ticket, which also includes admission to the Old Time Music Heritage Hall at the Historic Earle Theatre, making it one of the best deals in town. Add in the Regional History Museum and you've got enough to keep even the most curious visitors occupied until closing time.

Tanya Jones, executive director of the Surry Arts Council, which operates both the Andy Griffith and Twins museums, said visitors can easily spend the better part of a day between the two. "You could spend an entire day at the Siamese Twins Museum or more because there are 10 audio-visual stations with a massive amount of data depending on your area of interest," she said.

That's not idle boasting. The interactive touch screens throughout both museums allow visitors to dig as deep as they want into topics that catch their attention, from Andy Griffith's trombone playing to the Bunker twins' business dealings.

Griffith: Beyond Sheriff Taylor and Mayberry

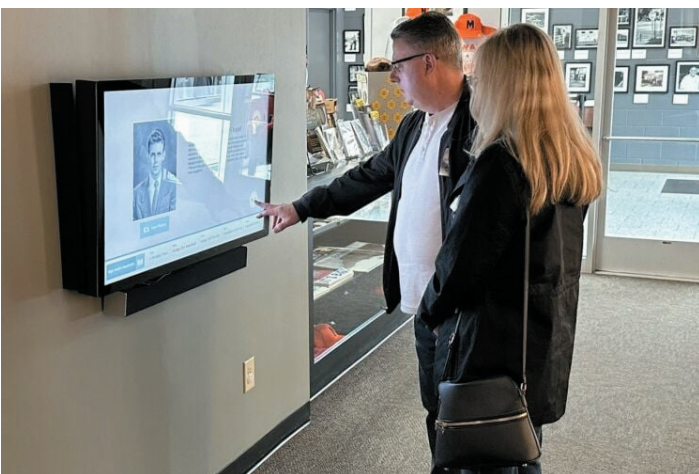
Most people walk into the Andy Griffith Museum thinking Sheriff Andy Taylor, Opie, Aunt Bea, and the gang. They leave knowing about a far more complex artist.

"When they leave, I mean he was a multi-talent threat. He did just about everything," said Abigail Linville, who gives tours of the museum. "I don't think a lot of people know."

The museum, which underwent a major remodel in 2017, tells Griffith's story chronologically: early years, comedy, Broadway, film, television and music. It's broken up that way intentionally, Linville explained, to give visitors the full scope of a career that went far beyond Mayberry.

Griffith's breakthrough came with "What It Was, Was Football," a monologue recorded in 1953 that became a surprise hit. Visitors can listen to it at one of the touch screen stations, along with his later work, including his award-winning gospel music.

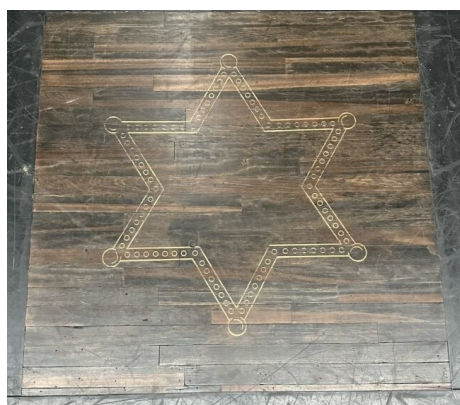
Linville said many visitors are surprised to learn of Griffith's turn on the Broadway stage. He had significant success there, including "Destry Rides Again" and his Tony-nominated performance in "No



Visitors to the Andy Griffith Museum interact with one of several touchscreen displays which show video clips and audio recordings from this storied career on stage, screen, and television.



After a failed venture at a barbecue restaurant, Andy Griffith got into the prepared food space with items including these canned beans.



The sheriff's star on the stage of the Andy Griffith Playhouse denotes where young Andy Griffith took the stage for the first time as a youngster in a talent show.



A note from Andy Griffith accompanies this Sheriff Andy Taylor uniform shirt reading, "This is one of the shirts I wore and was made at Nudies Rodeo Tailors in North Hollywood and that's what makes it special."

Time for Sergeants," which many people think of first as the movie of the same name.

Film roles followed, and not all of them wholesome. His performance in "A Face in the Crowd" as a power-hungry media personality earned critical praise but showed a darker side most audiences never associated with the man from Mount Airy. "It's really jarring, I'm sure. But it's my favorite," Linville said. "I like it because it makes me see him differently."

Among the artifacts on display: Griffith's Moravian Daily Text from 1934, the year he graduated from Mount Airy High School and headed off to college. The small devotional book came to the museum four summers ago from a woman in Downey, California, whose Moravian

church was closing. Inside, Griffith had circled scriptures and made notes, including marking the day he became a Moravian.

Other artifacts include a photo of Griffith receiving his Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush in 2005. There are costumes from "The Andy Griffith Show" including Otis the Drunk and Goober as well as a well worn suit from "Matlock."

Some may be surprised to find he tried his hand as a restaurateur, a menu from his barbecue restaurant where a hamburger cost 25 cents is on display as are cans of Andy Griffith kidney beans - because when one thinks Andy Griffith they think canned vegetables, of course.

More than an actor, Griffith was also a music man. He fell in love with blues music at 14 after seeing "Birth of the Blues" and bought

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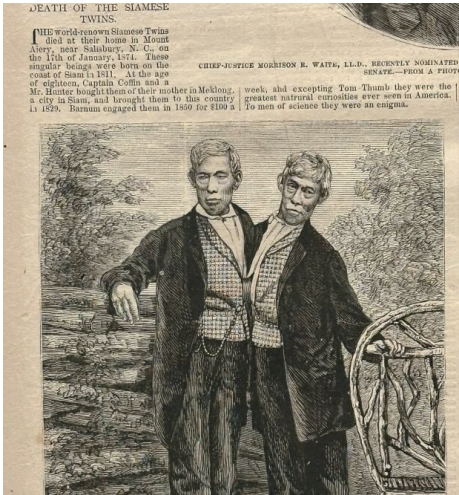
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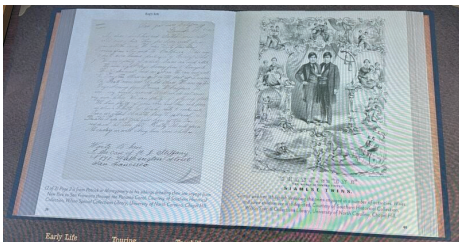
An bronze casting of Chang and Eng Bunker is one of the highlights of the Siamese Twins Museum - the newest addition to Mount Airy's collection of museums.



The Siamese Twins museum is chockfull of mementos from the twins' life from their time touring the world through their deaths. This death notice ran in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.



Inside the entryway to the Siamese Twins Museum is a replica of a Buddhist Shrine. Eng and Chang Bunker are thought to be the first Buddhists to arrive in the United States.



To learn more about the rich history of the Bunker twins and their families, several touch screen displays contain historical documents and interviews from Bunker descendants.

himself a trombone. He recorded multiple albums over his career, and visitors can hear clips of him playing.

For those wanting more, Linville recommends looking up his appearance on "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson, where Carson asked him to play his trombone on air.

Behind the main exhibits, there's a backstage tour option that takes visitors through additional artifacts and stories. Combined with the interactive stations - each packed with photos, videos and audio clips organized by decade - the museum offers far more depth and a more complete picture of the man than many expect.

Bunker Twins: Dignity and accuracy

Across the street, the Siamese Twins Museum has come into its own since its grand opening last summer. Exhibits that were still under construction then are complete now, and Jones noted the museum continues to evolve as new artifacts and information come to light.

The museum's mission, Jones has said, is to tell the story of Eng and Chang Bunker "accurately, as accurately as possible, but also with dignity because that is something they worked hard to achieve in their lives."

That accuracy matters because, as Jones discovered while developing the museum, misinformation about the twins has been perpetuated for nearly two centuries. Much of what was written about them during their lifetimes was "sensational speculation" designed to drive ticket sales, not report facts.

One of the focal points of the museum is a bronze statue of the brothers in their traditional pose, standing next to a checkerboard. The board is no accident - Jones said when the pair were a traveling act, people often paid for the privilege of playing the two in checkers.

Artifacts on loan from Bunker descendants include China fairings - small porcelain figures that were mass-produced in Victorian-era Germany and given away as fair prizes. The fairings on display are on loan from the great-great-great-granddaughter of Eng, Emmeline Webber. There's a double ladder-back chair that belonged to Chang, appraised by "Antique Roadshow" in 2001. Outside on the granite patio sits a millstone from the twins' farm, used to grind corn into meal.

The lobby features a "Made in Surry County" exhibit with work from local artisans

including pottery, needle-felted figures, handcrafted guitars, and quilts.

Outside the new museum, a granite patio overlooks the Blackmon Amphitheater and wraps around the building with checkerboard-topped tables made from Mount Airy granite.

Jones, who is related to the Bunker twins, said the museum is seeing more visitors coming specifically for the twins' story rather than as an add-on to a Mayberry pilgrimage. That includes visitors with Asian heritage interested in the Thai-American connection.

Local legacy: Industries, icons, and identity

A short walk away on Main Street, the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History offers a different kind of deep dive - this one into the town and county's past, with artifacts dating back as far as 12,000 B.C.

The museum covers a lot of ground both in square feet of display space and through time. The Mount Airy Granite Company exhibit is massive and still growing, according to Curator of Collections & Archivist Amy Snyder.

When the granite company's office closed, museum staff were invited to take what they wanted. They came away with hundreds of huge boxes of materials that are still being processed.

"Right now we still have 165 huge boxes to go through," said Snyder. They've already cataloged thousands of photos donated by the granite company, pulling images from scrapbooks that span from 1915 into the 1950s.

On display are drafting tables, trade show materials, and schematics for projects Mount Airy Granite built around the world. Photos show the granite used in everything from the Wright Brothers Memorial to the Bullion Depository at Fort Knox to countless buildings in Mount Airy and beyond.

In a nod to Mount Airy's history as "The Sock Capital of the World," the museum contains a collection of hosiery machines donated when a High Point textile firm closed. Snyder noted that at least one came from Spencer's, a local company. Museum staff hope to eventually get a couple of the machines working and set them up in an assembly line to demonstrate sock-making. The machines represent an industry that was huge in the region for decades and employed thousands of local residents.

The museum also focuses on "hometown



An exhibit dedicated to area firefighters is currently found in the basement of the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History including this 1946 American LaFrance fire truck that cost the town \$8,945 to purchase.



An exhibit dedicated to music of the day is found inside the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. Among other items, it includes a phonograph as well as a locally made Lowry Organ.



One of Mount Airy's favorite daughters is country music star Donna Fargo. The Mount Airy Museum of Regional History has an exhibit dedicated to "The Happiest Girl in the Whole USA" including several performance costumes and dresses.

heroes" – local figures who made their mark beyond Mount Airy. That includes country singer Donna Fargo, the Easter Brothers gospel group, and Tommy Jarrell, considered the ultimate icon in old-time music circles. Musicians from around the world still come to Mount Airy for the annual Fiddlers Convention to study with local old-time musicians carrying on that tradition.

There's a train exhibit that was recently moved between floors and is still being installed, Snyder said. World War I and World War II memorials honor local veterans. And yes, there's some Andy Griffith material here too, though the dedicated museum down the street covers his story in much greater depth.

Exhibits tackle settlement history, showing how Mount Airy grew from a one-farm outpost to a town as people moved down from the Blue Ridge Mountains. There's an agriculture exhibit covering the region's agrarian roots, including moonshine production. A Victorian-era exhibit explores what people did for entertainment once they had leisure time.

The museum also houses three of the town's first fire trucks and tells firefighting stories, including the tragic 1957 Flat Rock Elementary School fire. Third-grade student Larry Adams died in the flames, and his teacher, Cora Beasley, died days later from injuries sustained while trying to rescue him. The tragedy led to fire safety law changes in North Carolina within three months and prompted the establishment of the Four Way Volunteer Fire Department, the first in Surry County.

There's also a hospital and medical exhibit, a collection of 1924 roadsters, and a kids' play area. Meeting rooms on the upper floors are available for rent for special events and birthday parties, which happens with some frequency according to Snyder.

Making a day of it

The beauty of Mount Airy's museum triangle is that it doesn't require planning. Park near the Andy Griffith Museum and Twins Museum on Rockford Street. Visit both – the combo ticket makes the decision easy and also grants access to the Old Time Music Heritage Hall at the Historic Earle Theatre, with exhibits on old-time music and home to WPAQ's weekly Merry Go Round radio show.

Each museum offers something different. The Andy Griffith Museum reveals the depth of one man's artistic career. The Twins Museum corrects centuries of misinformation and tells a story of two men who wanted dignity and achieved it. The Regional History Museum shows how a small town in the foothills became what it is today, from prehistoric inhabitants to modern industry.

On a cold winter day when the trails are muddy and the river's too chilly for anything but looking, museum-hopping is a good way to spend the time. And unlike hiking Pilot Mountain, you can do it all without worrying about the weather forecast.

Jones said visitors regularly tell her they had no idea how much

there was to see. That's the point. These aren't small-town museums with a few dusty display cases. They're professionally curated spaces with real artifacts, interactive technology, and stories worth telling.

"Nobody can do it but us," Jones said of the Surry Arts Council's preservation efforts. "It's the local connection.

It's using what we have that's location-specific, things that can only be found here."

From Rockford Street to Main Street, these institutions share a common mission: preserving the stories that can only be told here.

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PHOTOS BY TOM JOYCE

The Andy Griffith mural on Moore Avenue is one key stop along the squad car tour route.

Squad Car Tours *keep on rolling*

BY TOM JOYCE | tjoyce@mtairynews.com

They seem to be everywhere.

Take a ride through Mount Airy and one is sure to see a 1960s-era Ford Galaxie meandering along local streets “holding up traffic,” Mayberry Squad Car Tours owner Mike Cockerham readily admits.

But no one, especially locals, seems to mind, because despite their slowness the vintage vehicles are an important part of the local tourism economy.

A visit to Mount Airy by “Andy Griffith Show” fans is almost sure to include a stopover at the South Main Street business

operating from Wally’s Service Station. There, plunking down \$50 allows a carload of up to five passengers to take a trip to yesteryear.

At least in a yesteryear ride.

It’s not just about squeezing bucks from eager tourists. They also get something in return: a chance to visit key Mayberry sites folks might be hard-pressed to find conveniently on their own – with a dash of local color added to the mix.

The cars of the type Andy and Barney might have driven all seem the same – a black-and-white two-tone color scheme with a gold sheriff’s badge adorning the front passenger doors. And they’re typically transporting passengers looking on excitedly.

But the Mayberry Squad Car Tours fleet actually contains

seven Ford Galaxies from model years 1961 to 1967, the heyday of “The Andy Griffith Show.”

“Ford Motor Company gave them (the producers) a new car every year,” Cockerham explained regarding an automotive trend now seen on the streets of Mount Airy.

Once beginning a tour, which generally lasts 35 to 45 minutes, riders are whisked away (well maybe that’s too strong a term) to places including Griffith’s homeplace on East Haymore Street, now a bed and breakfast.

Along with a blast from the siren, visitors further are treated to the Surry Arts Council complex that includes the Andy Griffith museum and playhouse and Andy-Opie statue photographed innumerable times.

Also on the itinerary is a cruise down North Main Street, which young Griffith inhabited, taking in sites such as Snappy Lunch, a diner mentioned on the show.

The Andy Griffith mural on Moore Avenue is a frequent spot for photo opps, and no visit to Mount Airy would be complete without swinging by its famed granite quarry.

“Some go to the Moravian Church,” Cockerham said of Grace Moravian on North Main Street, a key spot for his driver team including history buffs who know that’s where Andy honed his artistic talents.

“We’ve got about a dozen,” the tour business owner said of his guides.

That includes Mike Cockerham himself. “And I’ve driving a lot here in the last month,” he observed recently in reference to the fall tourist season and the accompanying heavy work load.

Mayberry Squad Car Tours is open daily, except for closing on Sundays when cold weather arrives.

“Probably about the middle of November,” Cockerham said, who added that tours can be arranged on the Sabbath under special circumstances.

Business takes off

Cockerham launched Mayberry Squad Car Tours in 2003.



Visiting movie and TV actor Daniel Roebuck readies for a ride in a Ford Galaxy.

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Squad cars are a key presence at Mayberry Days parades.

“I just had this crazy idea,” he recalled of an endeavor that mirrored one of his interests. “I’d always worked on cars.”

That includes maintenance on the Mayberry fleet, often seen at special events such as parades and a local half marathon in addition to the day-to-day schedule.

Cockerham, 62, who has a wife and two daughters, also has been employed at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., from which he

retired after nearly 37 years.

The emergence of the squad car attraction came at a time of renewed interest in “The Andy Griffith Show.” It has been shown nationwide continually since debuting in the early 1960s.

“I guess just seeing that the tourists were starting to come to town,” Cockerham said of the increasing numbers that spawned his tour business venture.

Ironically over the years, the operation built around old cars has been fueled by internet technology for those seeking tours.

“Our website does have a lot of traffic,” Cockerham acknowledged.

No signs of stalling

More than 20 years after first rolling out, Mayberry Squad Car Tours is still in high gear, at least metaphorically, since the vehicles themselves rarely approach 35 mph.

“My business has grown every year,” Cockerham said.

The obvious consideration accompanying this is the notion by some that the Mayberry mystique is winding down – but not Mike Cockerham.

“I have not seen any indication of that,” he stated emphatically.

Cockerham says evidence is clear to the contrary.



Riders stop to take in a spectacular view of the local granite quarry.



The tours originate from Wally's Service Station on South Main Street.

It's one thing when older fans die off, but they are more than being replaced by the youthful population, in his view.

"There are a lot of young kids watching the show," Cockerham said. "We see young folks who know a lot about the show."

Riders represent states as far off as California. "They come from all over the world," the business owner said.

Repeat customers are included, he added. "People will come back and do multiple tours," maybe six to eight times, and locals often will when friends or relatives come to town.

Celebrities have been among their ranks including "AGS" cast members George Lindsey (Goober), Howard Morris

(Ernest T. Bass), Clint Howard (Leon) and others.

Actor Daniel Roebuck (from "The Fugitive" movie and "Matlock" TV series fame) also has taken his share of Galaxie excursions.

"We've become good friends with him," Cockerham related.

"You never know who you are going to meet."

No matter the age and other demographics, there is a commonality associated with a squad car tour.

"Everybody's in a good mood when they come," Cockerham observed.

"It's just fun taking people around our town and seeing them get a kick out of it," he said.



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PHOTOS BY HOBART JONES | SURRY ARTS COUNCIL

Nearly four dozen ukulele players were in town last weekend for the annual Surry Arts Council Ukulele festival.

A tradition continues: **Ukulele festival draws musician from near and far**

BY JOHN PETERS | jpeters@mtairynews.com



Marcie Ryan, of Saint Augustine, Fla., concentrates on learning new ukulele playing techniques.

It might have sounded a little ... well, offbeat, six years ago when the first mumblings began, an idea floated back and forth between friends.

Then came the first notes -- whimsical, fun, light-hearted.

In the land of blue grass and old time music, with smatterings of country and Southern rock and gospel and even a bit of classical and big band music thrown in, this was not the sound a visitor to Mount Airy might have expected.

The ukulele.

Yes, a sound often associated with the Hawaiian Islands, or for folks of a certain age the musical accompaniment to the high-pitched warbling voice of Tiny Tim, of late 1960s fame.

The ukulele.

While there were clearly ukulele players around Mount Airy before 2013, that is the year the instrument really gained a following, with the birth of Mount Airy Ukulele Invasion, a local performance group better known as MAUI.

George Smith, a local musician, singer and song writer, started the group. He said in an interview in 2019 when he and his wife announced the group would start, he was hoping for maybe half a dozen folks to show up. Seventeen were at that initial meeting, and the group has grown since then -- adding regular concerts and other performances over the year.



Kent Knorr, one of the ukulele workshop instructors, works with a few students during a session.

In 2019, the Surry Arts Council sponsored the first Mount Airy Ukulele Music Convention -- with 100 musicians, from across North Carolina, Virginia, and elsewhere, descending upon the city for the three-day event.

A tradition was born.

This year, Oct. 24-26, more than 45 musicians from seven states attended the Surry Arts Council's seventh annual ukulele festival. The number is lower than that first one, but that is by design -- organizers found that having 100 students to deal with was simply more than they could handle while giving participants close attention. So registration has limited the number in recent years, but that hasn't made the gathering any less fun or meaningful for those taking part.

"Participants of all skill levels enjoyed three days of classes, strum-alongs, and exploring Mount Airy," organizers of the 2025 festival. Smith and Kent Knorr returned as instructors.

In addition to MAUI, Smith plays a variety of instruments and has played with numerous bands, opening for acts including Lynyrd Skynyrd, Marshall Tucker Band, and Drive By Truckers. In May of 2014, Smith released his first album, "The Music of George Smith," which is all original music. He continues to fill in with various bands and musical ensembles in the region.

Knorr has been performing and teaching music for more than 30 years. He is an instrument collector and builder and has been a founder/member of several different bands, played in studio on several albums, and has traveled up and down the East Coast playing music. In 2007, he founded the North Carolina Ukulele Academy, a school and shop that was stocked with more than 300



Local musician George Smith, standing, center, led ukulele players performing for WPAQ's Merry Go Round show on Saturday morning.

ukuleles and offers group ukulele classes and workshops. As owner of the academy, he taught more than 2,000 students of all ages and skill levels.

In addition to the workshop classes and jams in genres ranging from pop and rock to gospel, participants had the opportunity to perform during the WPAQ Merry-Go-Round live radio broadcast on Saturday, Oct. 25.

Plans are already underway for next year's Mayberry Ukefest, October 23-25, 2026. Those wishing to keep up with the event can sign up to be on the email list (melanie@surryarts.org) or follow the Surry Arts Council Facebook page at www.facebook.com/surryartscouncil.



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What's Happening In **MAYBERRY**

Concerts, shows and more!



BALSAM RANGE

Whether visiting Mount Airy for a day, or staying a week, there's always something going on -- concerts, shows, displays, and more.

CONCERTS & EVENTS

Note: For tickets to all concerts that are part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series or the Blue Ridge And Beyond series, or to purchase season tickets, visit <https://www.surryarts.org/shows/menu.html>, or call 336-786-7998. Season ticket prices, good for admission to any or all of the summer concert series shows at the Blackmon Amphitheatre, are \$160. Tickets for individual Summer Concert Series tickets are \$20 for most shows, with children 12 and younger admitted free. Prices vary for the Blue Ridge And Beyond series. Concessions are on sale at each of the Summer Concert Series shows. Those attending the concert are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions will be available for purchase.

NOVEMBER

22 **Balsam Range** will be in concert at the Historic Earle Theatre, taking the stage at 7:30 p.m. Dr. Marc Pruett (banjo); Tim Surret (bass, dobro, baritone, and lead vocals); Caleb Smith (guitar, lead & baritone vocals) and Alan Bibey (mandolin, vocals) make up Balsam Range. They adopted the name of a majestic range of mountains that surround part of the home of three of the founding members in Haywood County, North Carolina. The Great Balsam Range is where the Great Smoky Mountains meet the Blue Ridge Mountains. Since its formation in 2007, Balsam Range has become one of the genre's most award-winning acts. The group has garnered 13 IBMA awards on the heels of 11 critically acclaimed albums. Balsam

Range has left audiences spellbound while headlining major festivals from coast-to-coast, selling out venues across the nation and in multiple appearances at the Grand Ole Opry. In 2025, Buddy Melton stepped down and Bluegrass great Don Rigsby joined the group on select dates as a special guest, lending his fiddle and "high lonesome" tenor vocals to bring a new energy and sound to the beloved group's audience. Tickets for the Nov. 22 performance are \$65 for preferred seating, \$55 for orchestra seating, and \$45 for balcony seating.

DECEMBER

18 **A Very Embers Christmas** will be on stage at the Andy Griffith Playhouse in a show that begins at 7:30 p.m. The world-famous Embers Band with Craig Woolard presents its Christmas show featuring holiday favorites and a few visitors, like Frosty, Rudolph, and friends. The stage is magically transformed into a holiday showplace, setting the mood for holiday cheer and maybe, just maybe a little snow. Reserved seat tickets are \$30.

21 **Elkin Big Band** "Light up the Andy Griffith Playhouse" show will take to the stage at the Andy Griffith Playhouse in a Sunday afternoon presentation, beginning at 3 p.m. Preferred seating tickets are \$25, orchestra seating are \$20. Experience the magic of the holiday season with the Elkin Big Band's Christmas concert. This authentic big band ensemble, featuring a full rhythm section and vocalist, will fill the venue with the vibrant sounds of classic holiday jazz. The festive program will

feature a mix of timeless favorites, from traditional carols to jazzy holiday standards and beloved movie soundtracks. Don't miss this family-friendly event, known for its high energy and classic big band sound, which is sure to put you and yours in the spirit of the season. An evening of spectacular big band music is perfectly suited for creating unforgettable holiday memories.

FEBRUARY

6 **North Carolina A&T Fellowship Gospel Choir** will be performing at the Andy Griffith Playhouse at 7 p.m. in this free concert in celebration of Black History Month. Hosted by the Surry Arts Council and African American Historical and Genealogical Society.

7 **WPAQ 77th birthday celebration** is slated for 5:30 p.m. at the Historic Earle Theatre. This free celebration will include a number of area bands celebrate nearly 80 years of broadcasting and community involvement by Mount Airy's WPAQ. Music, singing, and plenty of dancing for those inclined to take to the dance floor. Event is free.

28 **Tommy Jarrell Birthday Concert and Dance**, featuring The Round Peak Band, will get underway at 6:30 pm at the Historic Earle Theatre. The event features Surry County Old-Time music and traditions and celebrates the life

of Surry County native and old time musical legend Tommy Jarrell. General admission tickets are \$12.

WEEKLY EVENTS

Experience the **Merry-Go-Round**, the second-longest continuously running live radio broadcast in the nation, with a live show every Saturday at The Historic Earle Theatre from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each week. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. Admission is \$8 or a Merry-Go-Round Annual Pass is \$20, or a current Surry Arts Council season pass.

LIVE THEATER

DECEMBER

7 **The Nutcracker**, performed by New York Ballet for young audiences will take to the stage at the Andy Griffith Playhouse at 3 p.m. The classic story of Clara, a young girl on the brink of womanhood, whose dreams are both childlike and tinged with romance, comes to life. Surry Arts Council dance students perform with professional dancers in selected scenes in this popular, one-of-a-kind production. Preferred seat tickets are \$25; orchestra seats are \$20.

13-14 **Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer JR., the Musical**, will be presented in two shows, one on Dec. 13 and the second show on Dec. 14. Rudolph saves Christmas and goes down in history in this family classic, to be staged at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Filled with holiday hits such as “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “A Holly Jolly Christmas,” Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer JR. features all of your favorite characters including Santa and Mrs. Claus, Hermey the Elf, Bumble the Abominable Snow Monster, Clarice, Yukon Cornelius and, of course, Rudolph. It’s an adventure that teaches us that what makes you different can be what makes you special. Because of his shiny nose, Rudolph doesn’t feel like he belongs in Christmastown and sets off to find a place that accepts him. Along his journey, he encounters fellow misfits, only to realize that home is where he has belonged the whole time. When a storm threatens to keep Santa’s sleigh from taking flight, it’s up to Rudolph to save Christmas. Performances are 3 p.m. each day, tickets are \$20.



THE EMBERS

FEBRUARY

20-21 **Disney Descendants: The Musical**, by the Surry Arts Players, set for a two-day run, Feb. 20- Feb. 21 at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Based on the popular Disney Channel Original Movies, Disney’s Descendants: The Musical is a new musical jam-packed with comedy, adventure, Disney characters, and hit songs from the films. Imprisoned on the Isle of the Lost – home of the most infamous villains who ever lived – the teen-aged children of Maleficent, the Evil Queen, Jafar, and Cruella De Vil have never ventured off the island – until now. When the four troublemakers are sent to attend prep school alongside the children of beloved Disney heroes, they have a difficult choice to make: should they follow in their parents’ wicked footsteps or learn to be good? Performances are 7 p.m. on Feb. 20, 3 p.m. on Feb. 21. Tickets are \$20 for orchestra seating tickets.

ONGOING

The Old-Time Music Heritage Hall, housed in the Historic Earle Theatre at 142 N. Main Street in Mount Airy, is open daily throughout the year. Exhibit hours are 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sundays, noon to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Saturday WPAQ’s Merry-Go-Round and exhibits are on display from 11 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Self-guided tours of the Old-Time Music Heritage Hall are \$8 per person plus tax per person and includes admission to the Andy Griffith Museum, Betty Lynn Exhibit and Siamese Twins Exhibit.



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