

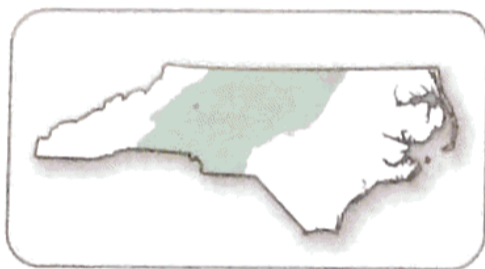
Section 3

The Piedmont Region



As you read, look for:

- the features of the Piedmont region
- the significance of the fall line
- vocabulary terms **fall line, headwaters, sectionalism, mill village, NASCAR, monadnock**



North Carolina's **Piedmont** region is a place almost anyone can recognize immediately, for it has an unforgettable feature—its red clay. These iron-rich clods show up wherever a field is plowed or a lawn reseeded, and their stain is hardly ever removed from soiled laundry. One finds this distinctive color from Oxford near the Virginia line to Shelby near South Carolina, and in almost all places in between. The red clay is actually the subsoil in most places, meaning that, at one time, trees and forests covered it with black woods dirt. The widespread timbering and cropping of the region made it bleed red in the rain as early as the 1800s.



Did You Know?

Kudzu was brought to the United States in 1876 for the Centennial Industrial Exposition in Philadelphia. It was on display at the Japanese pavilion.



To control the erosion of red clay, state officials planted millions of kudzu plants in the 1930s, hoping the fast-growing vine would save the soil. Instead, the big-leaved kudzu—a native plant of Asia—turned out to be the monster that almost ate North Carolina. On a hot, wet day it can grow several inches. Its tendrils will reach anywhere, all the way up power poles and over the tops of abandoned buildings. By the late twentieth century, kudzu was common as a weed throughout the Piedmont.

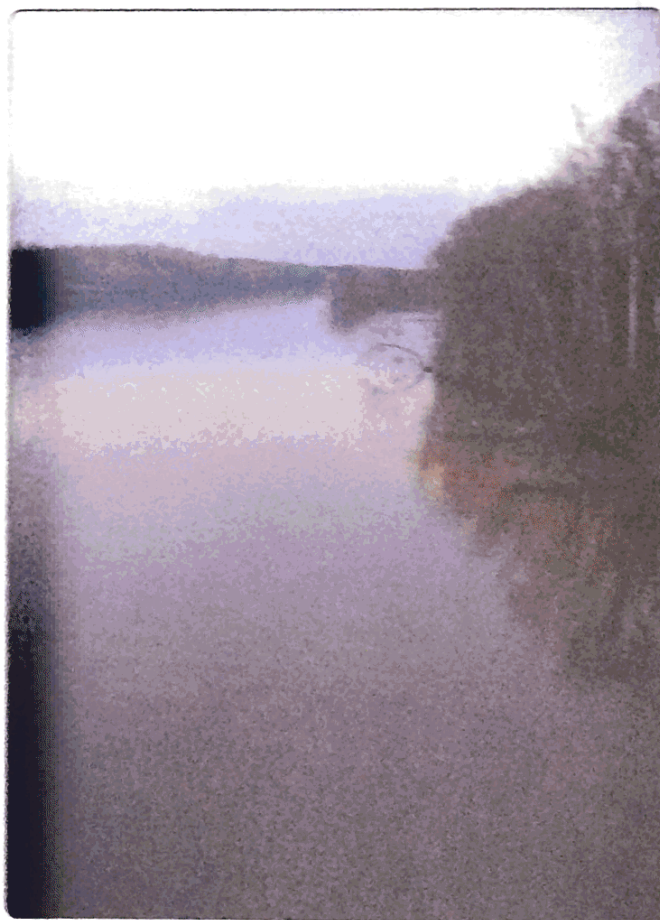
The Fall Line

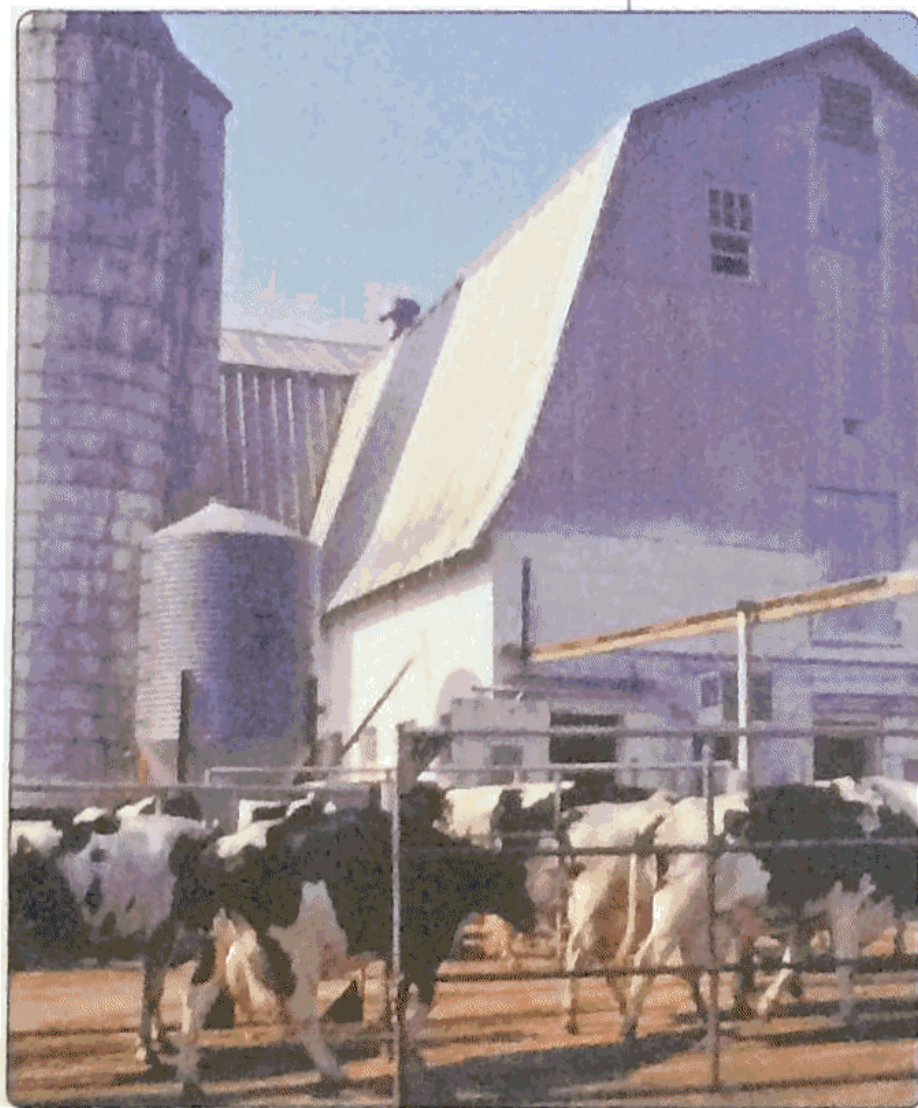
The Piedmont's red clay erodes so easily because the region is hilly. The landscape is pocked with hills and hollows that twist and curve in all directions. Technically, most of the Piedmont—which in Latin means “foot of

the mountains”—is a plateau, a step up from the Coastal Plain, a step below the Blue Ridge. In fact, the line that divides the Piedmont from the Coastal Plain is called the fall line. That is the place where rivers flowing out of the Piedmont, like the Tar or the Neuse, actually go down their last hill. At these points, the rivers usually become flatter and smoother, allowing boating. The fall line extends from the north near Roanoke Rapids southwest past Raleigh and Fayetteville. A state park near Raleigh is called Falls of the Neuse. Historians generally use the fall line to divide North Carolina into east and west sections. Similarly, the western side of the Piedmont, often called the foothills, is bounded by the ridge line, where the Blue Ridge Mountains rise up on the horizon.

The two principal rivers of the Piedmont region are the Yadkin-Pee Dee and the Catawba. These rivers do not run to the fall line. These rivers have their headwaters (the springs from which they first flow) on the side of the Blue Ridge and head east until being turned sharply south when their currents encounter very hard rock layers. After the rivers bend—the Catawba west of Statesville, the Yadkin west of Winston-Salem—the two parallel one another into South Carolina, where they flow into the Atlantic north of Charleston. One of the key reasons **sectionalism** (excessive concern for local interests and customs) developed in the state

Opposite page, above: The rich clay soil of the Piedmont nourishes a variety of crops. **Opposite page, below:** The Pee Dee River, seen here near Albemarle, is one of the major rivers of the Piedmont. **Below:** The Catawba River flows south into South Carolina just west of Charlotte.





Top: Farming in the Piedmont has not always been easy. This abandoned farm is in Moore County. **Above:** These dairy cows on a Piedmont farm are going in for milking.

was the lack of connection between the rivers of the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain.

More than half the Piedmont is covered in forests. Where there are extensive pine trees, it usually means that they were planted years ago for erosion control on an abandoned farm. Biological succession—where coniferous trees like pines give way to hardwoods like oak or hickory—occurs all over the region.

Farms and Factories

Farming has been as much a tradition in the Piedmont as the Coastal Plain. However, except for certain rich areas with unusually rich brown soils, like the area around the Lowe's Motor Speedway near Charlotte, farming has always been a struggle in the Piedmont. Early on, farmers depended upon livestock to make their living; since the end of World War II, they have returned to dairying. This too has been in decline in recent times. Only in western Iredell County and eastern Alamance County are a significant number

of dairies left in the region.

The decline in farming was countered by the building of factories, as people made a living processing and manufacturing raw materials produced elsewhere in the state. In the area stretching from Kannapolis to Gastonia, textile mills began to make cloth of all types for an international market. Durham, Winston-Salem, and Reidsville were home to

CAROLINA CURIOSITIES

The Mysterious Devil's Tramping Ground

Most North Carolinians know that Wake Forest University students can be “demon” deacons and that Duke University students paint themselves blue because they are “devils.” These athletic nicknames are one of the funnier parts of our state culture. So too is the folk belief that the Devil himself shows up in North Carolina every night to think about his wicked plans.

The Devil's Tramping Ground—an actual place south of Siler City—is world famous. People have been going there for more than a century, ever since a Wilmington newspaper first published a story about it in 1882.

The story goes like this: Supposedly, Satan paces all night just about every night around a strange circle of dirt in Chatham County. Mysteriously, nothing will grow in a near-perfect circle that is about forty feet in diameter. Folks in the neighborhood say that objects that fall into the circle during the day, like sticks or rocks or even heavy logs, are gone by the next morning. Hunters swear that their dogs will not cross over the space, and that they yip and howl if they are taken near it.

People who have stayed there during the night have often had strange dreams. More than one group of brave college students has abandoned its camp during the night. No one, however, has ever claimed to have seen the Devil.

There are other explanations for the place. One old tradition says that an Indian chief was killed on the spot, and his blood tainted the soil forever. More recently, advocates of Unidentified Flying Objects say that a space ship must have landed there and scorched away the grass.

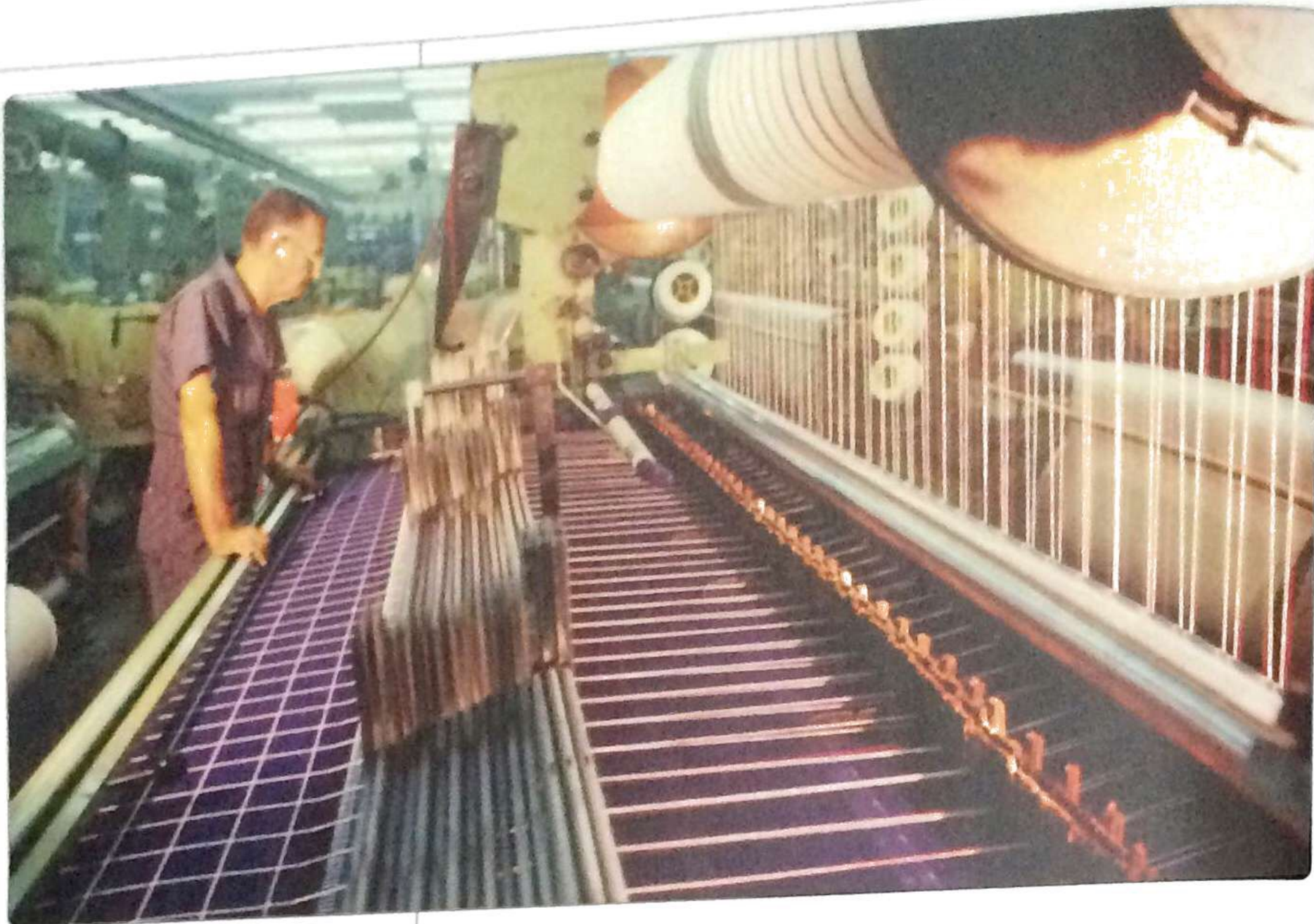
Scientists have another idea. Recently, a soil specialist from out of state took samples of dirt from the track of the circle, from the center of the circle, and from the nearby woods. He then put seeds in each sample and carefully watered them. The seeds in the soil from the center of the circle and from the woods sprouted. The seeds put in the “doughnut” soil—that is, the dirt from the place where the Devil supposedly paces—did not. Tests then showed that the doughnut soil is totally lacking in carbon, a necessary element for plant growth.

SR 1100 DEVIL TRAMPING GRD RD



Above: Leaves often cover the “devil's path,” despite legends to the contrary.

So, the mystery has been solved . . . or has it? Scientists still scratch their heads over the fact that the soil changes completely in its fertility just an inch from the edge of the path. And, there is still the question: Why such a near-perfect circle? Why is this the only place where it happens? Why is it not found anywhere else?



Top: This photograph of a loom was taken around 1980 at the Fieldcrest-Cannon Mill in Kannapolis. **Above:** Cooleemee has retained much of its textile heritage. These are two of over three hundred former mill houses that have been preserved.

the leading cigarette makers in the world in the early twentieth century. High Point, Lenoir, and Hickory built chair factories, using hardwood from nearby forests. A traveler in the Piedmont in this period would expect to see a factory in every town.

Textiles, tobacco, and furniture were regarded as the three principal industries in the state. Many of the workers in these factories lived on the edges of town in clusters of housing called **mill villages**, like the Proximity neighborhood in Greensboro. The company owned the houses, provided stores and schools, and gener-

ally influenced the lives of workers both inside and outside the factory.

All three principal industries went into sharp decline in the 1990s, as foreign competition cut into their shares of the market. Most notably, textile factories have been closed in recent years in one Piedmont town after another. Fieldcrest-Cannon Company of Kannapolis was the largest closure, in 2003, when more than 5,000 people lost their jobs in one day. In contrast, Phillip Morris Tobacco Company continued to do well with a cigarette factory in Concord, marketing a lot of its product to the factory workers in Asia that were now making textiles and furniture.

Banking and Racing

Most Piedmont cities have worked hard to find other economic outlets. Over the past two decades, Charlotte has become a center of international banking, with both Bank of America and Wachovia headquartered there. Charlotte has also become the support center for stock car racing. Companies that build and maintain cars on the NASCAR circuit are concentrated in the triangle from Charlotte to Concord to Mooresville. **NASCAR** is an acronym (an abbreviation that itself seems to be a word) meaning National Association of Stock Car Automobile Racing. In the spring of 2007, ground was broken for the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte.

In Winston-Salem and Durham, community leaders have attempted to turn around the decline of industrial jobs with the growth of medical services. Wake Forest University in Winston and Duke University in Durham both have world-class medical schools that staff regional hospitals.

Smaller towns have also turned to innovative businesses. Salisbury is headquarters for the grocery chain Food Lion, the largest private employer in the state. The Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area continued to develop ways to use their resident universities. Since the 1960s, the Research Triangle Park, located in a finger of the Sandhills between the three cities, has been a leader in technology innovation, particularly in pharmaceuticals and computers.

Did You Know?

More banking activity is concentrated in Charlotte than anywhere else in the United States, except for New York City.

Below: The start of the 2004 Coca-Cola 600 at the Lowe's Motor Speedway in Concord. The Charlotte area is home to most NASCAR teams.





The Uwharries

The most distinctive natural landmarks of the Piedmont are its **monadnocks**. This hard-to-pronounce word refers to a geological condition where a point of land stands out because all of the land around it has been eroded. The most famous monadnock is Pilot Mountain north of Winston-Salem. This handsome spire has a distinctive cap of granite that makes it recognizable

from as far as forty miles away. It has served as a landmark for North Carolinians for centuries, from the first Indian paths to the laying of interstates.

One important cluster of monadnocks is often overlooked by North Carolinians, but its location influenced the shaping of the state almost as much as did the barrier islands. The Uwharrie Mountains are located south of Greensboro and east of Salisbury. Although most scientists believe that the Uwharries are older than the Appalachian Mountains, they do not look the part. They resemble miniature mountains from a distance, their elevations seldom reaching more than 2,000 feet. The best-known Uwharrie “peak” is Morrow Mountain near Albemarle.

Because of their slopes and because of the slate found in their soils, the Uwharries were not as thickly settled as other areas in the Piedmont.

Top: The monadnock Pilot Mountain rises above the surrounding farmland. Pilot Mountain was named a National Natural Landmark in 1976. **Above:** Salisbury, a city in the Uwharries, is a national trendsetter in the restoration of its Main Street.



This is why, in large measure, there is the Piedmont Crescent, the curved necklace of small towns, one after another—Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Lexington, Salisbury, and Concord—that stretch from Raleigh to Charlotte.

First the buffalo, then the Indians followed a trail that became known as the Trading Path. Travelers on it from the coastal areas of Virginia kept the Uwharrie “peaks” like Occaneechi, near today’s Hillsborough, and Caraway Mountain, near Asheboro, to their right as they headed south toward the Catawba and Cherokee Indian towns in South Carolina. White settlers gradually moved the network of trails northward, since the soil was more fertile as one got away from the Uwharries. When the first railroad was built in the Piedmont, it was routed around the Uwharries to the north and west, to save money on grading and to bring it closer to the center of farming. Later highways, then interstates, followed the same route.

Below: This view of the Uwharrie horizon draws thousands each year to Morrow Mountain State Park near Albemarle. The area shown was home to the some of the ancient inhabitants of the region.

It's Your Turn

1. What is the most unforgettable feature of the Piedmont region?
2. What divides North Carolina into east and west?
3. What were the three principal industries in the Piedmont region?

CAROLINA PLACES

Mayberry

Perhaps the best-known place in North Carolina is not actually in the state, but on television. “Mayberry, North Carolina” became famous because of “The Andy Griffith Show,” a 1960s comedy series. Since that time, the show has been rerun just about every day for a half century, courtesy of cable television.

Mayberry was “founded” by North Carolina native Andy Griffith, who grew up in Mt. Airy in Surry County. He attended the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he became interested in acting. Griffith also tried his hand at stand-up comedy. After teaching for a year at Goldsboro

High School, Griffith hit the big-time with a monologue titled “What It Was . . . Was Football.” That was based upon the idea of a country boy coming to Chapel Hill for the first time. In the 1950s, Griffith did comedy in clubs and then began to get acting jobs. His next break was playing a naive moun-

Below: There really was a Floyd’s Barber Shop on Main Street in Mt. Airy. It is the inspiration for the same shop on the television show. The real Snappy Lunch still serves up its famous pork chop sandwiches almost every day.





Above: Mt. Airy has preserved Andy Griffith's boyhood home. **Below:** Three of the most popular characters in the show were played by Andy Griffith (Sheriff Andy Taylor), Don Knotts (Deputy Barney Fife), and Ron Howard (the son Opie Taylor).



tain boy in the movie *No Time For Sergeants*. By 1960, Griffith had earned enough fame to have his own television show. In the show, Griffith portrayed Andy Taylor, the town sheriff.

Griffith and a group of television writers, including Duke University graduate Harvey Bullock, created a mythical town full of characters that any North Carolinian would recognize as real. Otis Campbell, the Scots-Irishman who drank too much but had a heart of gold; Barney Fife, whose superstitious habits followed the traditions of Piedmont Germans;

and Gomer Pyle, whose parents could have worked in the cotton mill villages; all rang true to viewers. One character in the show, Emmett Clark, was named for Griffith's childhood best friend.

Part of the show's popularity was its sense of kindness toward all people, regardless of who they were. Mayberry was a place full of odd people who often did foolish and silly things, but no one ever hated them for their behavior or their weaknesses. Usually, a lesson was learned and a value taught, as in the episode when Opie, the son of the sheriff, killed a bird with his slingshot. Opie had to learn to take care of the orphaned baby birds and then let them fly away. The show even slyly called attention to race relations in the South. The show had no black characters, but in many episodes black "residents" were on the streets.

The closest real town to Mayberry in North Carolina is Mt. Airy, which has proudly claimed its heritage as an inspiration for Andy Griffith's career. Visitors to Mt. Airy can see a mock-up jail, a barber shop, and even the "Snappy Lunch," a diner actually depicted in the show. Most folks who eat there have the Mayberry Special, a pork chop sandwich. Even into the twenty-first century, Mt. Airy residents continue to visit their downtown, walking, talking, visiting, and even going to the movies on a weekday night. Mt. Airy was honored in 2003 with a statue of "Andy and Opie" given to the town by the cable channel TV Land.

Griffith himself went on to other television and movie roles. He came back to North Carolina when he retired, building a home in Manteo.