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## Story Ideas

### **From Mayberry to Merlot**

Actor and native son Andy Griffith grew up in Mount Airy who became known for his role as Sheriff Andy Taylor in the 1960s sitcom *The Andy Griffith Show*. The town draws fans from around the world that trek to the town to pay homage to the show. Mount Airy draws similarities to the fictional town with more than 35 Mount Airy people, places and things that are referenced on the show. Most people who come to Mount Airy looking for a flavor of Mayberry don't realize that Mount Airy is a good jumping off point for the Yadkin Valley wine region. There are 35 nearby wineries in the Yadkin Valley American Viticulture Area (AVA).

### **Yadkin Valley: Emerging as Napa of the East**

In a decade, the Yadkin Valley AVA wine region has burst onto the viticulture scene. In 2002, the Yadkin Valley became a designated American Viticultural Area, (AVA). In that time, the wine region has grown from 5 wineries to 35 wineries with Surry County emerging as one of the Yadkin Valley's top destinations with a total of 14 wineries. Surry County is also home to the Surry Community College Shelton-Badget NC Center for Viticulture and Enology, a one-of-a-kind East coast facility for wine-making education and research with an on-site winery, classrooms, climate-controlled wine cellar, microbiology labs, and a large assembly hall.

### **Winemaking Program Leads Nation**

The first of its kind east of the Mississippi, the North Carolina Center for Viticulture and Enology opened in 2010. Over the past dozen years, Dobson-based Surry Community College's viticulture and enology program has sprouted numerous vineyards and wineries in the growing Yadkin Valley wine region. The school's winery received its permit as a commercially bonded facility in 2003. The material palette of steel, wood, cables, cork, stone, and terracotta brick reinforce the importance of winemaking to the region. The 16,000 square-foot facility houses a crush pad, fermentation and processing facilities, temperature-controlled barrel storage, lab and testing spaces, classrooms, faculty offices, a library and a 4,000-square-foot grand meeting hall. Students also maintain the on-site vineyard along with helping to sell 400 to 500 cases annually at festivals and special events under the name Surry Cellars. Phase II of the center will include an auditorium and science building for hosting conventions and conferences for the wine industry.

### **Golf, Wine, Mountains, and Mayberry**

The Yadkin Valley golf experience pairs fairways and chardonnays for golf packages including golf, lodging, and winery visits to the Yadkin Valley wine region along with sites in and around Mount Airy. Packages include golf, lodging, winery tours, gratuity, and tax. Golf courses include Cedarbrook Country Club in Elkin, Cross Creek Country Club in Mount Airy, and Olde Beau Golf and Country Club in Roaring Gap.

### **Seeing Mayberry from a Squad Car**

Dip your toes into the nostalgic, make-believe world of Mayberry while touring Mount Airy in an old 1964 Ford Galaxy squad car. Taking off from the replica Wally's Service Station, tour guides of Squad Car Tours drive Mayberry fans from near and far giving them insights into Mount Airy and the sites that relate to The Andy Griffith Show. Fans are taken by Andy's home place and through Main Street past Floyd's Barber Shop and Snappy Lunch. They cruise by the Andy Griffith Museum and through historic sites in the town. The squad car tours are truly the highlight of any trip back to Mayberry.

### **Meet Thelma Lou the Third Friday of the Month**

Around Mount Airy, everyone knows her as Thelma Lou (Barney Fife's girlfriend). Actress Betty Lynn moved to Mount Airy in 2007 from her West Hollywood home. She fell in love with the town after her numerous appearances during Mayberry Days. Every third Friday, Betty Lynn signs autographs, poses for pictures, and shares stories about the show with fans.

### **Mayberry Days Celebrates Andy**

Every last week in September, fans of the fourteenth most popular show on the TV Land cable network trek to Mount Airy each year to in celebration of The Andy Griffith Show in Andy's hometown of Mount Airy, NC. The festival is hosted by the Surry Arts Council and includes guest appearances from actors on the show, tribute artists like the Mayberry Deputy, bluegrass music, fun, games, trivia contests, Colonel Tim's Talent Time, and the annual Mayberry Days parade. For info on the Mayberry Days Festival, go to [www.mayberrydays.org](http://www.mayberrydays.org).

### **A Tribute to Andy Griffith**

The world's largest collection of Andy Griffith memorabilia is housed in the Andy Griffith Museum, which is located next door to the Andy Griffith Playhouse, a half-mile from the actor's boyhood home. It houses a treasure trove of items collected by Emmett Forrest, a former schoolmate and friend of Griffith. Among the hundreds of items of Andy's acting career, fans of the show will see signs from the courthouse doors, Barney's salt-and-pepper suit, and keys to the jail. The collection also contains donated items by Francey Knotts, widow of actor Don Knotts (played Barney Fife) and actress Betty Lynn (played Thelma Lou) along with items donated by George Lindsey (played Goober). The museum is open seven days a week and admission is \$3 per person. Hours are: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays; and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sundays. For info on the museum, call (336) 786-1604, or visit [www.AndyGriffithMuseum.com](http://www.AndyGriffithMuseum.com)

### **Blue Man Group Alums Buy Elkin Creek Vineyard**

Couples Nick and Jennifer White and Louis and Carrie Jeroslow who met while working in their roles on the Blue Man Group in Las Vegas now own Elkin Creek Vineyard. Owners Nick and Jennifer came to the Elkin Creek Vineyard on a trip looking for a venue to have a wedding near High Point, NC. Nick, who took online viticulture classes from Surry Community College while in Vegas, has gone from drummer to vineyard manager. Jennifer, the head stage manager, now stages weddings and special events. Louis, a special effects engineer and amateur winemaker, is now a professional winemaker, while Carrie, resident director in Vegas, directs a lot of operations and handles wellness and her ministry duties.

### **Cabins at White Sulphur Springs**

Six new, upscale cabins are available in Mount Airy with the opening of the Cabins at White Sulphur Springs. Located within ten minutes of downtown Mountain Airy and eight miles from the Blue Ridge Parkway, these luxury, Arts and Craft-style cabins feature vaulted wood ceilings, fireplace, private deck, Wi-Fi, and flat-screen satellite televisions. Each cabin comes with a kitchenette with a refrigerator, dishwasher, microwave, toaster oven, and a Keurig Coffee maker. Each cabin is fully furnished

with dishes, flatware, glassware and wine glasses. The cabins are surrounded by a 145-acre property with access to hiking trails, a hammock park, horseshoe pits, and bocce courts. The Ararat River provides ample opportunities for fishing, kayaking, or just taking in the scenery.

### **The World's First Siamese Twins**

Eng and Chang Bunker—the original Siamese Twins—moved to White Plains in 1845, just west of Mount Airy. Since their birth in 1811 until their death 1874, the twins created a sensation wherever they went. Born in Siam, the boys were sold to traveling agents, Robert Hunter and Abel Coffin, who took them to appearances throughout the United States, Canada, South American, and Europe. Later in life, they became their own agents and settled in North Carolina and married sisters, Adelaide and Sarah Yates. They produced 22 children between the two families and followed a rigid schedule of three days in one house followed by three days in the other. Eng and Chang Bunker are buried at White Plains Baptist Church. Their descendants—some 1,500 of them—have scattered across the country, but return each year for a family reunion during the last full weekend in July. An exhibit dedicated to the Siamese Twins is housed in the lower level of the Andy Griffith Playhouse, adjacent to the Andy Griffith Museum. Exhibit hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Tickets to the exhibit can be purchased at the Andy Griffith Museum.

### **What's a Sonker?**

Each first Saturday in October, a daylong festival honoring the Appalachian deep-dish pie called a “sonker” is held at the Edwards-Franklin House, about seven miles west of Mount Airy. Sonkers are a distinctive regional dessert, a cross between a cobbler and a pie. It's usually served in a large rectangular pan to be served to large crowds at church suppers and community functions. Each year the Surry County Historical Society sponsors the Sonker Festival in the 1799 house along with music and other sweet treats. The Edwards-Franklin House is located at 4132 Haystack Road.

### **Round Peak Style of Old-Time Music**

If you are listening to a string band from Tokyo or from Oslo, you are probably listening to the Surry County sound. In old-time music, Surry County is well known for its distinctive style referred to as Round Peak style, which has a driving rhythm and intense syncopated melody. Tommy Jarrell was raised in the Round Peak community where old-time music was not only a form of entertainment, but a way to bring neighbors and the community together. Many musicians from the Round Peak community could play music passed down from the earliest English and Scotch-Irish settlers. This music eventually became known as Round Peak music, which was one of several distinct regional styles of a genre called “old-time” music.

### **Old-Time Music Heritage Hall**

Located in the Earle Theatre in downtown Mount Airy, the music hall honors some of Surry County's best-known giants of old-time music, such as Tommy Jarrell, Fred Cockerham, Kyle Creed, Benton Flippen, Verlen Clifton, Earnest East, Clyde Johnson, Paul Sutphin, Ralph Epperson, and Jimmy Viperman. The exhibit includes larger-than-life portraits of the musicians with an accompanying audio tour. The lobby of the theatre contains a new display with artifacts. Participants can also view a showing of the UNC-TV Documentary: “Music of Surry County.” The hall is open seven days a week and also hosts jam sessions, radio broadcasts, music workshops, dances, and performances. For more information, visit [www.surrycountymusic.com](http://www.surrycountymusic.com).

### **Family Radio Station Continues Tradition**

On Feb. 2, 1948, Ralph Epperson began broadcasting on 740 on the AM dial with music that showcased the local talent of his listening area. Over 65 years later, his son Kelly Epperson would still be carrying on the tradition of broadcasting bluegrass and old-time music of the area. Even the biggest

stars and promoters recognize WPAQ. It was partly because of Ralph Epperson that kept bluegrass and old-time music from becoming extinct. When groups touring the nation are within broadcast range of WPAQ, they dial into the station, and occasionally those bands visit, such as the time when Grammy-nominated group The Grascals stopped by for a visit. The station also still runs a weekly live radio broadcast called Merry-Go-Round, which is the second-oldest live radio show in the nation (The Grand Ole Opry is the longest).

### **Earle Theatre**

Originally known as the Earle many years ago, the theatre was built in 1938 by the partnership of Earl Q. Benbow and Percy A. Boone who also owned the Grand Theatre across the street. The cinema gained considerable national attention when it was selected to present the premier of Shirley Temple's film "Just Around the Corner" in 1938. On March 22, 1940, the cinema hosted one of the southern premiers of "Gone With The Wind" simultaneously with the showing in Atlanta, Ga. In 1958, after the arrival of television had closed down other theatres, the Earle was in the possession of Stewart and Everett Theatres in Charlotte, NC. Later Carmike Cinemas purchased the property and eventually donated it to the Surry Arts Council who still operates it as a movie house today and as a community music center. The theatre is open seven days a week with access to the Old-time Music Heritage Hall and hosts jam sessions, radio broadcasts, music workshops, dances, and performances. For more information, visit [www.surrycountymusic.com](http://www.surrycountymusic.com).

### **Mount Airy Festivals**

**Tommy Jarrell Festival:** To celebrate Tommy's life and music, the Tommy Jarrell Festival was created in 2002 to commemorate this accomplished old-time musician. Dances, music, concerts, and workshops are held during the last weekend of Feb.

**BudBreak Wine Festival:** Held the first Saturday in May in downtown Mount Airy, BudBreak Wine Festival celebrates North Carolina wine along with multiple food vendors, local artists and musical entertainment. Proceeds from the event will benefit charity organizations supported by the Mount Airy Rotary Club. [www.budbreakfestival.com](http://www.budbreakfestival.com)

**Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention:** Held the first full weekend in June, the Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention is a full-blown fiddlers' convention that serves as a kind of annual homecoming. The two-day event is held at the local convention grounds and includes contests for bluegrass and old-time musicians. [www.mtairyfiddlersconvention.com](http://www.mtairyfiddlersconvention.com)  
**Mayberry Days** – Since 1990, thousands have gathered in Mount Airy each last week of September for a four-day festival known as Mayberry Days. Some of the events include the barbecue cook-off, parade, golf tournament, entertainment, talent show, autograph signings, and more. [www.mayberry-days.org](http://www.mayberry-days.org)

**Autumn Leaves Festival:** This three-day festival is held the second weekend in October in downtown Mount Airy and attracts thousands for food, crafts, and music. [www.autumnleavesfestival.com](http://www.autumnleavesfestival.com)