

## *Looking At South Hill, Virginia*

A trip to South Hill is worth taking. It is the right place to come for relaxation, to meet friendly people, and to unwind and remember what life is all about.

From a settlement of essentially a store and three houses, the community grew into a town large enough that by 1901 it became incorporated. At that time, tobacco and tobacco warehouses were the dominating industry. Today, tobacco still remains an important part of South Hill as the tobacco market here is one of the largest markets of flue-cured tobacco in the Commonwealth. In addition, the Atlantic and Danville Railway played an important part in the town's growth and stature.

South Hill is located in Mecklenburg County, which is in Southside Virginia. The county borders the North Carolina state line on the south, and is approximately halfway between Richmond, Virginia, and Raleigh, North Carolina (approximately 75 miles from each). South Hill also is approximately the same distance between Danville, VA (to the west) and Suffolk, VA (to the east) along Highway 58.

South Hill is a progressive and growing town with a population of approximately 5,000 residents and is 6.33 square miles in size. When incorporated in 1901, the town was laid out in a perfect circle of 1.2 square miles. On Jan. 1, 1967 the town lost that distinction when it annexed surrounding areas. The town's boundaries grew to 4.7 square miles. Further annexations have increased its boundaries to the present 6.33 square miles.

Outdoor fun is everywhere in this area. Much of life in the region focuses on the natural beauty of two large lakes -- Buggs Island Lake, to the west, that is also known as the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir. This is a 50,000-acre lake with over 800 miles of shoreline, and it is the largest lake in Virginia. South Hill is also near Lake Gaston, to the South, with 300 miles of shoreline. Both lakes are easily accessible for sailboats, speedboats, pontoons, and fishing boats.

South Hill is also known as “Tournament Town” because of the quality fishing tournaments held regularly on the two lakes. Such tournaments as the Virginia BASSMASTERS Invitational, Virginia Bass Federation, and the Pro-Am Teams Classic are just a few of the tournaments that bring hundreds of fishermen to the area each year. At both lakes, fishermen enjoy catching largemouth bass, striped bass, white bass, crappie, walleye, and catfish. With the beauty and natural surroundings of the two lakes, it should come as no surprise that South Hill and the surrounding areas are popular spots for camping, picnicking, and swimming, as well as pleasure boating.

There are other sights of interest for all ages. A Doll Museum houses over 500 dolls, some dating back to the late 1860s. Mrs. Virginia Evans, a retired public school teacher, donated the dolls that had been collected over a 15-year span to the South Hill Chamber of Commerce. Her request was to establish a Doll Museum, and it is one of three museums located in the Chamber building, which used to be the depot for the A&D Railway.

It is only appropriate that the depot building houses two of the largest displays of model trains in Virginia. The South Hill Model Railroad Museum is a replica of the A&D and the South Hill countryside. The other is the Wiggle, Bump and Agony Railroad. The WB&A Model Railroad was donated by Pete Ma Dan of Sumter, SC, who wanted to donate his late father’s model train to someone who would keep his father’s creation alive. When he read about the Chamber’s model train museum, he gladly donated the entire collection (over 300 pieces).

The third museum in the chamber office building is the Southside Museum of Natural History that consists of stuffed animals such as an eagle, a hawk, a bobcat, and many others. A fantastic view that has murals painted in the background.

Another museum is located just one block from the chamber Office. The Tobacco Farm Life Museum of Virginia, where one can learn of the heritage of tobacco farming. A Curator is available to guide visitors through the exhibits that show the tools and equipment used in tobacco farming in the early 1900s.

South Hill is a very unique and friendly community. Plan to visit here soon. It will be a pleasant experience that you will not soon forget.

