

Want to Phone Home? Dial 'em for Mayberry!



by Jim Clark

I recently got my first smartphone. If you know me at all, you're not surprised that it took me this long to get one. I'm no "Man in a Hurry." (The fact is that my phone carrier finally made me accept a free smartphone from them to replace my 13-year-old flip phone that's about to be obsolete.) No, the real surprise is that I've even been permitted to use a smartphone at all! Of course, I still won't have this new phone turned on or even carry it with me the vast majority

of the time—just as with my old phone. You can lead a Goober to Twitter, but you can't make him tweet!

My idea of a great telephone is still the candlestick model on Andy's desk at the Mayberry Courthouse. And as of this month, we can now see one of the actual prop candlestick phones used in filming "The Andy Griffith Show." Donated by a group of fans, it's on display with other original props and wardrobe at the Andy Griffith Museum, which the phone can now call home.

I like the idea of Andy Taylor, when he wants to call home, just picking up his candlestick phone and saying, "Sarah, get me my house." For me, Siri will never be a good substitute for Sarah.

Fortunately, we don't need a phone of any type when we're looking to place a call home. Or rather, looking for a place to call home. Mayberry can be everybody's place to call home. Likewise, Mount Airy is a place to call Mayberry. And never more so than during Mayberry Days.

One of the biggest draws for fans who'll be attending this 27th annual edition of the festival is getting to visit with friends who are lucky to call Mount Airy home throughout the year, including beloved Betty Lynn. Be sure to check out the wonderful new permanent exhibit about her life (unveiled on her 90th birthday last month) on the lower level of the Andy Griffith Playhouse. It's included with your Andy Griffith Museum admission.

Other favorite stops include the Snappy Lunch, where Mary Dowell and her family and friendly staff serve up delicious tenderloin biscuits for breakfast and their world famous pork chop sandwiches for lunch. There's no telling how many selfies have been taken with those gorgeous sammiches that Charles Dowell invented.

In May, we sadly lost Russell Hiatt, America's Barber, next door to Snappy at Floyd's City Barber Shop. Russell's legacy is enthusiastically being carried forward by son Bill and his devoted crew of cutters. Russell's gallery of photos still covers the shop walls, and Bill regularly posts photos of recent visitors on his Facebook wall.

With the true Southern hospitality that you'll find all over Mount Airy, Alma Venable (known simply as Aunt Bee to many) and her family welcome guests to the Mayberry

DIAL UP the ANDY GRIFFITH MUSEUM

Don't miss the recently displayed candlestick phone! The phone was used as a prop in the Mayberry Courthouse on *The Andy Griffith Show* during at least its first five seasons, and likely during the final three seasons as well. Set decorator Ken Swartz sold the phone from his collection during a prop sale in Van Nuys, California, on July 5, 1977. It was subsequently purchased at auction by a group of fans for donation to the Andy Griffith Museum. Construction has begun to ready the Andy Griffith Museum for the newly designed exhibits. Installation is scheduled for early 2017. Watch the website for details. Cases will mimic storefronts from Mayberry with the Mayberry Courthouse being the centerpiece. There is a large audio-visual component that will feature many of Andy's movies, songs, clips from shows, photos, and other aspects of his life. The new Betty Lynn exhibit was unveiled on her 90th birthday, August 29, 2016. The hallway is covered with memorabilia and a new television displays over 350 photos of her life. This part of the exhibit remains a work in progress. The Mayberry-Mount Airy exhibit has been upgraded and has a new home in the photo gallery adjacent to the Betty Lynn exhibit.

The Andy Griffith Playhouse has new seats and has been painted. The lobby has been updated with new photos and will soon have the television with photos of Andy's life. There has been a lot added to the backstage area and Backstage Tours now have more information and things to see. Abigail is working on labels for all of the photos and memorabilia which will enhance the experience. All remains a work in progress but much has been done.

GUIDED TOURS OF THE ANDY GRIFFITH PLAYHOUSE and MUSEUM GARDENS AND GROUNDS

Groups are now enjoying Andy Griffith Playhouse Backstage Tours with Heather Elliott and Abigail Linville. We continue to add photos and posters to the walls of the backstage area. Groups also have the opportunity to enjoy tours of the facility grounds with Master Gardener Ginny Adams. The gardens were designed with native North Carolina plants for continuous year round blooms and interest. They were designed by landscape architect Chip Callaway who also did the design for Cindi and Andy Griffith's Manteo home. Chip is from Mount Airy and resides in Greensboro, NC, where he operates Chip Callaway and Associates and specializes in residential, hospitality and historic garden design.

Motor Inn, a place many of us call home whenever staying overnight in town. During Mayberry Days, listen for Alma, finely dressed as Aunt Bee, yodeling at Colonel Tim's Talent Time with her three grandsons leading her backup band. Ah-ha—finally a reason to use the video camera on my new smartphone!

All up and down Main Street and all over town, welcoming faces give us visitors constant reasons to smile. Mount Airy always makes us feel right at home. The many reminders in Mount Airy of Andy Griffith himself—most notably the TV Land Landmark statue of Andy and Opie, the Andy Griffith Playhouse and the Andy Griffith Museum—also have that happy effect on us.

Many of us can't think of the Andy Griffith Museum without also warmly remembering the late Emmett Forrest, Andy's lifelong friend whose collection of artifacts and memorabilia remains the heart and soul of that museum, which is currently undergoing an exciting makeover to enhance the entire visitor experience. Surrounded by all the memories of Andy Griffith and Mayberry in that building, we can't help but feel right at home there.

And when all the special "Andy Griffith Show" guest stars join the festivities during Mayberry Days each year, Mount Airy becomes even more than a place to call home. It becomes a cause for genuine celebration. There's never anything phony about the sheer joy of the experience.

You see, as it turns out, if you're looking for a great connection with Mayberry, Mount Airy is the perfect app for that!



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