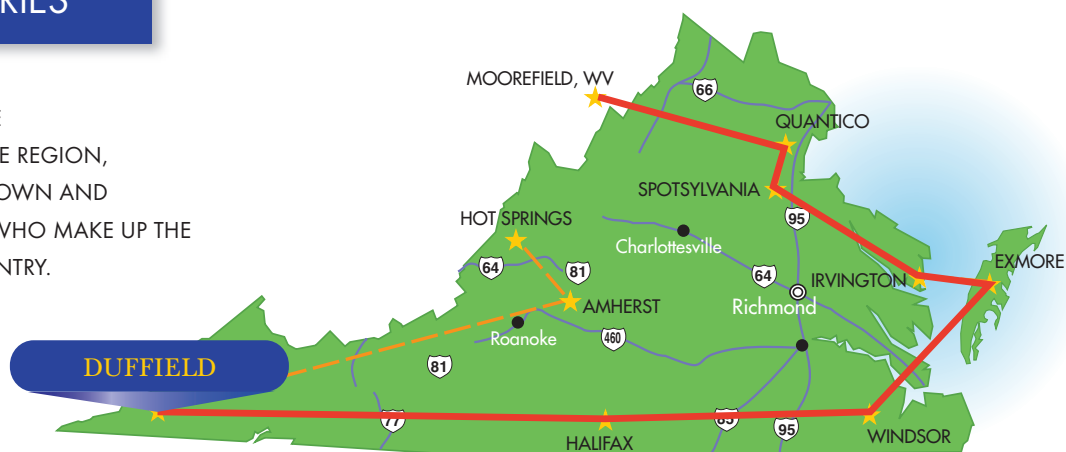


DOWN HOME SERIES

AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2007, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS YEAR'S EIGHTH STOP, WE'LL BE ...



DOWN HOME IN

DUFFIELD

BY JASON MCCARTY, CONTRIBUTING WRITER • PHOTOS COURTESY OF JASON MCCARTY

ONCE A GATEWAY TO TRAILBLAZERS,
TODAY'S DUFFIELD IS A SMALL TOWN
WITH BIG CONNECTIONS

Duffield may be Virginia's smallest incorporated town, but it has ties with extremely big names and organizations like Daniel Boone, Tempur-Pedic, and Hollywood.

According to the 2000 census, the town of Duffield had a population of 63 people, making the Scott County town the smallest in the state of Virginia. However, due to boundary adjustments in 2004, the neighboring town of Clinchport may take the title in 2010. The recent boundary adjustment increased Duffield's population to approximately 85 people.

For better or worse, everyone knows one another in Duffield, and Virginia's smallest town remains a close-knit community. Community members possess a large amount of civic pride, and most people are extremely knowledgeable about the rich local history.

Native Americans named the area Little Flat Lick, but the locality was renamed Duffield in 1818 by Sam Henry Duff, who settled the area after moving his family west from North Carolina.

Duff was not the first settler of European descent in the region. One of his early neighbors, John McKinney, was a brother-in-law of Daniel Boone. Early explorers like Daniel Boone, Squire Boone, Dr. Thomas Walker, and Elisha Wallen crossed the Little Flat Lick

Valley numerous times during long hunts and explorations into western lands during the 18th century.

On Sept. 9, 2000, politicians from Tennessee and Virginia signed a proclamation that officially gave the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association, Inc., the rights to label, promote, and preserve the historical route used by these explorers.



The Welcome Center and main entrance to Natural Tunnel State Park.



AT A GLANCE...

POPULATION: 85

LAND AREA: 0.58 square miles

INCORPORATED: 1894

ELEVATION: 1,365 feet

FACTOID: A fire destroyed most of the town in 1916. The Duffield Inn hotel was saved by local residents who wet quilts and covered the large two-story, eight-room structure.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A movie prop for the Hollywood hit *Coal Miner's Daughter* sits at the main intersection of Duffield in Kenny Fannon's front yard. Today, the depot serves as a museum, and is full of railroad memorabilia. • Fannon opens the museum doors to anyone passing through. He is also the chairman for the Labor Day festival known as Duffield Days. • A scenic view from Natural Tunnel State Park over an area through which the Wilderness Road stretched. • The local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has erected a monument at the intersection of US 23 and US 58/421 marking the Wilderness Road.



Scott County and the present-day town of Duffield have been labeled the "Gateway to the West" because early explorers came through Scott County and eventually headed west into Kentucky through Kane's Gap or across Wallen's Ridge.

In March of 1775, Daniel Boone and his axemen blazed the now famous Wilderness Trail from Fort Patrick Henry to the Cumberland Gap. They came

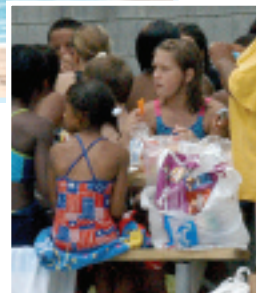
through Moccasin Gap near Gate City and traveled along Moccasin Creek. They then traveled along Troublesome Creek and the Clinch River. The group blazed past Natural Tunnel and into the Little Flat Lick Valley (Duffield).

From Little Flat Lick, the group of explorers headed through Kane's Gap and down Wallen's Creek. Ironically, Boone's eldest son, James, had been killed in a con-

flict with hostile Indians near Wallen's Creek two years earlier. Newspapers as far away as Pennsylvania and Baltimore published stories on the death.

Over 100 years after Boone and other explorers blazed the route through Little Flat Lick, the Virginia state legislature incorporated the town of Duffield in 1894.

The railroad was booming and it ran right through the middle of town. Duffield was the



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A local Scott County resident and her granddaughter enjoy sandwiches at the playground area of Natural Tunnel State Park. • Park interpreter Blake Greene places spelunking gear on Bailee Bentley before a trek into the tunnel. • The swimming pool at Natural Tunnel State Park is open during the summer, and the Cove Ridge Center (background) is used as an educational resource center. It is available year-round and can be booked overnight. (Inset) Day-campers enjoy lunch in the picnic area right outside of the swimming pool. • Gerald Miller has been the mayor of Duffield for the past seven years. He has served on the town council since 1996.

home of a couple of stores, blacksmith shops, a brick yard, and a large sawmill. All of these economic strengths helped persuade the Virginia General Assembly to incorporate the town.

The town government is made up of five elected council members. Members choose among themselves who will assume the roles of mayor and vice mayor. **Gerald Miller**, Duffield's current mayor, has held the position for seven years. He has served on the town council since 1996, and he regularly attends Scott County School Board meetings as a concerned member of the Duffield community.

Judges actually appointed town council members until 1998, when **Del. Terry Kilgore** pushed through legislation that changed the town's charter and brought about general elections in Duffield.

Today, Duffield lies at the crossroads of US 58/421 and US 23. It is home to a couple of shopping centers, a few fast-food restaurants, Scott County's only motel, and a thriving industrial park.

During the 1950s, "King Coal" was falling from power, and the region had to

make economic adjustments. In the 1960s, the LENOWISCO (Lee-Norton-Wise-Scott) Planning District Commission called for a regional industrial park and trade center. The commission chose Duffield for the site.

Bruce Robinette, LENOWISCO's executive director at the time, made some very difficult decisions and a few local enemies. However, his long-range vision has helped the town of Duffield greatly.

Today, Duffield's economic success relies on the success of the industries housed in the industrial park. The largest employer is Tempur-Pedic, a company that manufactures high-end sleep systems. Tempur-Pedic alone provides over 2,000 jobs for the region.

The industrial park is also home to Virginia Fiberglass, Gilbert Lumber, Rasnic Veterinary Clinic, Cumberland Glove, the volunteer fire department, and a few more businesses.

LENOWISCO's current executive director, **Ron Flanary**, continues to emphasize industrial development. However, the commission is also diversify-

ing the economic plan to aid technological infrastructure and tourism.

The town of Duffield is situated in a prime location for those interested in eco-tourism. Natural Tunnel State Park is located just a few miles from town limits. The park offers many outdoor activities, including swimming, hiking, biking, picnic areas, a campground, an amphitheater, chairlifts to the tunnel, and an environmental-education center.

The Thomas Jefferson National Forest also offers an abundance of activities for visitors of the area. Hiking, biking, horseback riding, fishing, and camping are all popular activities in the region. High Knob Campground is located near the scenic High Knob Lake, and a trail leads to the High Knob Tower that offers spectacular views of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

The tourism industry also caters to those who have a thirst for country music. "The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail," travels through Duffield along US 23. The Carter Family Fold in Hiltons is approximately 25 miles from Duffield.

LENOWISCO has worked with politicians, activists, and community leaders to promote these attractions in the region.

The main intersection of Duffield (US 58/421 and US 23) is home to Duffield's own attraction. What looks like an old train depot is actually an old movie prop. Hollywood moviemakers constructed the depot near Appalachia, Va., for the Hollywood hit *Coal Miner's Daughter*.

Duffield's **Kenny Fannon** received a phone call from a friend one day who told him that they needed to get the prop out of a mining camp before the Blue Diamond Coal Company destroyed it. After Fannon's friend could not convince his wife to put the old prop in their front yard, Fannon decided to place the depot in his yard.

Fannon negotiated with the coal company, and then he and a few other men cut the depot into eight-foot pieces and hauled it to Duffield.

Today, the depot is full of an abundance of old railroad memorabilia, including lights, lamps, whistles, miniature train sets, pictures, timetables, charts, and ticket boxes. There is also a guestbook full of names from people all over the world who have visited Fannon's little museum.

Fannon also has a caboose he acquired from the Norfolk Southern Railway placed on railroad ties on one end of the depot. Fannon is proud of his collection, but he takes real pride in the fact that he has willed the entire collection to his two grandsons.

Fannon's antique collection is not the only thing he shares with others in the region. He has also been the chairman for Duffield Days for the past 20 years. In 1981, the Duffield Ruritan Club suggested the town have a parade each Labor Day weekend. In 1987, Fannon and a few others decided to form the Duffield Days Committee, and he has been the chairperson ever since. The annual event has grown from a small parade to a weekend-long spectacle.

The parade is now accompanied by concerts, tractor pulls, tractor races, quilt shows, goat shows, crafts, and numerous food vendors. Over 8,000 people flock to Duffield over the Labor Day weekend to participate in the activities.

Even though Duffield is still "officially" Virginia's smallest town, the heart of the town remains large. Citizens possess a strong work ethic, a sense of civic duty, and the ability to throw a big party on Labor Day. Virginia's smallest town also offers an exciting array of outdoor activities that educate participants in the rich cultural history surrounding Duffield. ■

IF YOU GO...

Visitors to the Duffield area have a wide range of outdoor activities to choose from. Folks interested in camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, country music, and Appalachian culture will love a retreat to Southwest Virginia.

Natural Tunnel State Park is located right outside the town limits of Duffield. Visitors may camp, picnic, hike, swim, and enjoy some of the park's educational programs. People also get to marvel at one of Virginia's most spectacular natural wonders. Legend has it that Daniel Boone was the first person of European descent to see the tunnel. Other events at the park include **Pickin' in the Park**, guided wildflower walks, car shows, campfires, and hayrides. For more information on the park, visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/nat.shtml.

Jefferson National Forest covers over 690,000 acres throughout Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The **Clinch Ranger District** is located near the region and visitors can enjoy camping, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and swimming while taking in the scenic beauty of one of our greatest national forests. Local campgrounds within the forest include Bark Camp, Cane Patch, Cave Spring, and High Knob. For information on local campgrounds in the Jefferson National Forest near Duffield, visit www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/clinch/recreation/camping.

The Carter Family Fold in Hiltons provides entertainment for all ages every Saturday night. The homeplace of the famous Carter Family (Maybelle, Sara, and A.P.) brings in musicians each week who play old-time music much like the Carter Family did when recording in nearby Bristol during the 1920s and '30s. The Carter Family Fold also holds a two-day music festival each summer. For more information, visit www.carterfamilyfold.org.

NASCAR lovers should definitely make the trek to Southwest Virginia during March and August. The nearby **Bristol International Speedway** is home to



Each year visitors flock to Duffield to participate in the Duffield Days events.

two of NASCAR's biggest races. For information on the events at the speedway and dragway, visit www.bristolmotorspeedway.com.

Visitors can take a step back in time when they visit the **Homeplace Mountain Farm and Museum** in Weber City. Authentic log cabins, pens, cribs, and other structures have been collected from different places in Scott County.

As for Duffield itself, visitors definitely want to stop by and take a peek at **Kenny Fannon's Famous Train Depot**, which was a prop used in the Hollywood hit movie *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Fannon has taken this prop and has placed an eclectic collection of railroad memorabilia inside.

Duffield's biggest annual attraction is **Duffield Days**. Each Labor Day weekend, over 8,000 visitors flock to Virginia's smallest town to enjoy the parade, farm shows, tractor pulls, quilt shows, food, and live music.

Duffield may be Virginia's smallest town, but what's there is worth finding! ■



Duffield Days originally began as a parade and grew into the weekend-long festival that it is today.