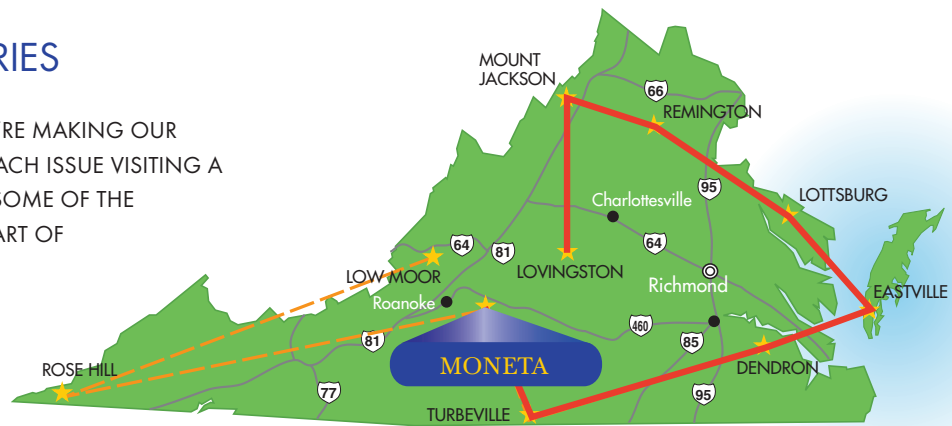AGAIN IN THE YEAR 2009, WE'RE MAKING OUR WAY AROUND THE REGION, EACH ISSUE VISITING A SMALL TOWN AND MEETING SOME OF THE FOLKS WHO MAKE UP THE HEART OF ELECTRIC CO-OP COUNTRY. ON THIS EIGHTH STOP, WE'LL BE ...

DOWN HOME IN

MONETA

Story and photos by James Morrison, Contributing Writer

Moneta (muh-NEET-uh) began as a small, country village, one of 20 such villages in Bedford County. Over the years, especially since the construction of Smith Mountain Lake in the 1960s, Moneta has evolved into a sprawling community that encompasses farmland and lakeside developments in both Bedford and Franklin counties.

For some people, the word Moneta means the old village. For others, Moneta is a broader community that extends out to a radius of about three miles from the old village. For yet others, Moneta is almost synonymous with a major por-tion of the Smith Mountain Lake community and the 85-square-mile ZIP code area served by the Moneta post office. This ambiguity is reflected in the name of a branch library — the "Moneta/Smith Mountain Lake Library" — and a new commercial development, "Downtown Moneta at Smith Mountain Lake."

HISTORY

In 1857, Jordan Lipscomb and others purchased farmland around what was to become the village of Moneta. Lipscomb established a tanyard there, and the area was first known as Lipscomb's Tanyard. In 1880, John Thaxton built the first store in the area. The Thaxton family wanted a post office in their store, and, searching for a name, Mrs. Thaxton suggested "Moneta," a name she had come across in a book she was reading. The Moneta post office was officially established in 1886.

Shortly after 1900, a rail line was laid through the area, and the village of Moneta grew, with half the village north of the tracks and half south.

One who knows the history of the area is native **Calvin Woodford**.

A new commercial develop-ment not far from old Moneta village (at left in top photo) combines both the Moneta and lake names — "Downtown Moneta at Smith Mountain Lake."

AT A GLANCE...

POPULATION: Some 100 residents live near the old village of Moneta. More than 10,000 live in the Moneta ZIP code.

LAND AREA: Old Moneta village, about 0.2 square miles; Moneta ZIP code area, approximately 85 square miles.

ELEVATION: Old Moneta, about 860 feet. Smith Mountain Lake, 795 feet at full pond.

FACTOID: Settled in 1857 and known as Lipscomb's Tanyard, the community became Moneta in 1886 when the wife of the founder of the local post office picked the name from a book she was reading. Smith Mountain Lake was constructed in the early 1960s.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Halesford Bridge, the only bridge crossing the main part of Smith Mountain Lake, connects Bedford and Franklin counties and two parts of the Moneta ZIP code area. • The Moneta Fire Department has a new station on the north side of the old village. • The view of the lake from the Boardwalk residential development is magnificent. Boardwalk is one of many developments by Franklin County/Moneta native Ron Willard. • Children of all ages enjoy feeding the carp at Bridgewater Plaza.

Woodford followed his father into the poultry and egg business, but in 1973 founded the Moneta Farm Service, which today, serving a broader clientele, is called the Moneta Farm & Home Center.

"The area around Moneta was predominantly rural and agricultural," says Woodford. "Tomatoes and tobacco were the two main money crops. There were six or seven tomato-canning factories within five miles of old Moneta, and there were lots of dairy farms.

"In the village, just north of the tracks, were three grocery stores, one with a post office in the back, an Odd Fellows Lodge that became a Masonic Lodge, a volunteer fire and first-aid department, and a school. On the south side of the tracks were a restaurant, another grocery store, a garage, and for a while a car dealership and a milk-receiving station that was later converted into a lumber yard." There were houses along the road running through Moneta.

In 1977, a house south of the tracks caught on fire. Two fire trucks trying to approach from the north were blocked by a train, and a 19-month-old boy in the house died. The Moneta Ruritans and others then pressed to have a bridge built nearby over

IF YOU GO…

Smith Mountain Lake Welcome Center — This welcome center, run by the local Chamber of Commerce, has volunteers and staff to advise you, plus many brochures, maps, and a running DVD tour of the area. It has lists of the many restaurants, motels and resorts, marinas and boat rentals, golf courses, and other business establishments in the area. The center is located at Bridgewater Plaza on the south side of Halesford Bridge on Rt. 122 crossing Smith Mountain Lake. Contact 800-676-8203, 540-721-1203, smlchamber@yahoo.com, www.VisitSmithMountainLake.com.

Bedford Area Welcome Center — This welcome center, run by the Bedford City & County Office of Tourism, has volunteers and staff to advise you, plus brochures, maps, and a small theater with a movie tour of the area. Located in the city of Bedford at the junction of Routes 460 and 122. Contact 877-447-3257, www.visitbedford.com.

Halesford Bridge — A drive across this bridge that connects Bedford and Franklin counties via Rt. 122 is a must. The wide view of Smith Mountain Lake with the mountains in the background has enticed many people to move to the lake.

Bridgewater Plaza — This plaza with a marina, boat and personal watercraft rentals, miniature golf, game arcade, an art gallery, shops, and restaurants is a long-time favorite attraction. Don't miss feeding the carp! The plaza is located immediately on the south side of Halesford Bridge on Rt. 122 in Franklin County. Across Rt. 122 opposite the plaza are additional boat-rental facilities. For information, contact the Smith Mountain Lake Welcome Center listed above.

National D-Day Memorial — Located just 12 miles north of the old Moneta village in the City of Bedford, this memorial honors the American and Allied military personnel who participated in the June 6, 1944, Invasion of Normandy. Tours led by volunteer guides are available. Contact 540-586-DDay or www.DDay.org.

Bedford Museum — This museum, located at 201 E. Main Street in downtown Bedford, has displays on more than two centuries of history of Bedford County and City. Contact 540-586-4520.

Booker T. Washington National Monument — Located eight miles southwest of old Moneta village and five miles from Halesford Bridge on Rt. 122 in Franklin County, the monument at B.T. Washington's boyhood home, run by the National Park Service, has information on Washington, a replica of the cabin in which he lived, and a working farm. Contact 540-721-2094, www.nps.gov/bowa.

Virginia Dare Tour Boat — This large, paddle-wheel-style boat provides excursions up and down the lake. Contact 540-297-7100, www.VADareCruises.com.

SML Antique & Classic Boat Show — This show will be held Sept. 19 at Mariners Landing in Bedford County. Contact the SML Welcome Center listed above.

Smith Mountain Lake Wine Festival — The 21st annual Smith Mountain Lake Wine Festival will be Sept. 26-27 at LakeWatch Plantation on Rt. 122, two miles south of Halesford Bridge. For tickets or information, visit www.VisitSmithMountainLake.com.

Smith Mountain Charity Home Tour — The 15th annual home tour will be Oct. 2-3, featuring eight beautiful homes around the lake, with proceeds going to eight charities. For tickets and information, visit online at www.SMLCharityHomeTour.com.

Smith Mountain Lake Chili & Craft Festival — The 7th annual festival will be held Nov. 7 at Bridgewater Plaza on Rt. 122 at the south end of Halesford Bridge. Contact www.VisitSmithMountainLake.com.

Smith Mountain Lake State Park — This state park offers campsites, cabins, swimming, a beach, boating, fishing, hiking, a visitors' center, and interpretive programs. It is located in Bedford County via Rt. 626. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/smi.shtml.

SML Community Park — This park has a beach, picnic facilities, and a fishing dock. It is located on the lake in Franklin County. Contact www.franklincountyva.org/parks.

Smith Mountain Lake Dam — There is a visitors' center where one can view the dam and learn how it works as a hydroelectric facility. It is accessed via Franklin and Pittsylvania counties. Contact the center at 540-985-2587.

Westlake — This area has two groceries, restaurants, shops and stores, art galleries, a library, a movie theater, a golf course open to the public, miniature golf, and other service-industry facilities. Contact Smith Mountain Lake Welcome Center, listed above.

the rail line, and this led to the construction of an overpass over the tracks on a new highway segment that bypassed the old Moneta village. When the federal government later required railroads to close some of their little-used crossings, Norfolk Southern closed the Moneta crossing, permanently dividing the village.

Today, in the old Moneta village, three of the eight non-residential buildings near the tracks are vacant and in disrepair. Along the roads near the village are about 25 homes, a school, a fire house, and a few other businesses.

In 1990, scenes for the comedy movie *What About Bob?* were filmed in the Moneta area, although the movie portrays it as New Hampshire. In the film, a psychiatrist (Richard Dreyfuss) vacations in a home on the Franklin County side of Moneta, while his patient (Bill Murray), trying to find the doctor, arrives by bus at one of the old stores in the village of Moneta. The home now is known locally as "The *What About Bob?* House." The old store is now vacant.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE

In 1960, Appalachian Electric Power Company began constructing a hydroelectric dam where the Roanoke River runs through a gap in Smith Mountain. The dam lies between Bedford and Pittsylvania counties, but most of the lake's shoreline lies along Franklin and Bedford counties. In 1963, the dam was closed and the lake began filling, taking until 1966 to reach full-pond depth of 795 feet above mean sea level.

Water is released through the dam to generate electricity during peak-demand periods. In non-peak periods, the dam's turbines are reversed, using electricity from distant power plants to pump water back up into Smith Mountain Lake from Leesburg Lake below the dam. The level of the lake can fluctuate a foot-and-a-half or more during the release and pump-back phases.

The lake is about 40 miles long, has about 500 miles of shoreline, and covers some 20,600 acres.

DEVELOPMENT

"The lake changed things," says Woodford, referring to the construction of the lake, whose main Roanoke River channel lies just 3.5 miles south of old Moneta village.

Construction of the lake has been followed by residential and commercial

development and an influx of people, including full-time residents, weekenders, and visiting vacationers. Many full-time residents are retired and come from the north. Some residents of nearby Roanoke and Lynchburg have built weekend homes at the lake, and some lake residents commute to these cities to work. Trying to define what constitutes the lake area and estimate the population around the lake is an elusive exercise, but some believe there may be more than 25,000 full-time residents in the general lake area.

Residential housing, commercial, and resort developments have been built on both the Bedford County and Franklin County sides of the lake, and construction continues. A large commercial development and large housing development are being built within a quarter of a mile of the old Moneta village.

There are several strip malls or cluster commercial areas. When one adds to the businesses in the Moneta ZIP code area the businesses in the Westlake area, which straddles the Moneta ZIP code boundary in Franklin County, one can count three supermarkets, more than a dozen banks, five gas stations, six marinas, several restaurants, two branch libraries, two YMCAs, and over 260 other business establishments.

Tammie Hartberger and **Marie Tuck** work at the Moneta Post Office, which covers the 85-square-mile Moneta ZIP code 24121, extending from north of the old Moneta village to the end of a peninsula in Franklin County, some 15 driving miles away.

"The Moneta Post Office now delivers to 5,237 single or cluster mailboxes," says Hartberger. Tuck, who has delivered mail for 29 years, adds, "The number of routes has increased from three in 1980 to 10 at

TOP TO BOTTOM, L-R: A local branch library uses the combined name "Moneta/Smith Mountain Lake Library." • Tammie Hartberger (left) and Marie Tuck work at the Moneta Post Office. As a mail carrier for 29 years, Tuck has seen the number of routes increase from three to 10, reflecting the population growth at Smith Mountain Lake. • The National D-Day Memorial is located in Bedford, 12 miles north of old Moneta. • The Booker T. Washington National Monument, located at Washington's boyhood home, is eight miles southwest of old Moneta. • Calvin Woodford, a Moneta native, has been a community activist and businessman for well over 50 years. • Lewis Creasey owns the grocery store that replaced several in old Moneta village.

present." In addition to the Moneta Post Office, there are seven other post offices that serve areas of Smith Mountain Lake.

Lewis Creasey owns the Shoprite IGA grocery, 1.3 miles south of old Moneta village. His store, in effect, has replaced the four small grocery stores that used to be in the village.

"I like to think of my customers as personal friends," says Creasey. "Many come here not only to shop but also to socialize. We have two picnic tables outside where some like to sit, talk, and eat. Some call this the town meeting. The farmers would rather eat outside than at one of the booths inside the air-conditioned store."

Referring to the influx of customers from the lake area in the summer, Creasey says, "Our busiest times are around Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. After Labor Day, we unwind."

ACTIVITIES AROUND THE LAKE

Life in the Moneta area and elsewhere around the lake is active. Many retired residents stay active volunteering. There are more than 15 churches in the Moneta ZIP code area. Service clubs include Ruritans, Lions, and Rotarians.

The Smith Mountain Arts Council promotes musical events, art and photography shows, and groups pursuing music, writing, stained-glass artistry, playreading, and dancing. The Smith Mountain Lake Charity Home Tour showcases beautiful lake-area homes to raise money for area charities. Many people volunteer at Lake Christian Ministries, which helps those in need with food, furniture, clothes, money, and other assistance; its building is located in the old Moneta village.

The Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce sponsors a wine festival, chili cookoff, business expo, and fishing tournaments. The two libraries sponsor events, and there are more than a dozen book clubs around the lake.

Opportunities abound for boating, fishing, waterskiing, wakeboarding, swimming, golfing, and tennis, and there are indoor and outdoor movie theaters.

New housing and commercial developments have grown in recent years, providing new conveniences and opportunities. At the same time, much of the rural nature and charm of the area remains. There are still farms, rolling pastures and woods, tobacco barns, and historic old homes and buildings, as well as the nearby mountains.

Postal carrier Marie Tuck tells of substituting for another carrier one day and opening a mailbox to find a terrapin inside. Tuck believes the postal patron wanted to give the terrapin to the regular carrier to help keep insects from his garden.

On the other hand, maybe the terrapin was just a way of telling the carrier and all of us to slow down, look around, and enjoy where we live. There is certainly much to enjoy about Moneta and Smith Mountain Lake. ■

James Morrison is retired from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, is a past president of the statewide Virginia Writers Club, leads the Lake Writers and Valley Writers groups, and is the author of Bedford Goes to War: The Heroic Story of a Small Virginia Community in World War II.