

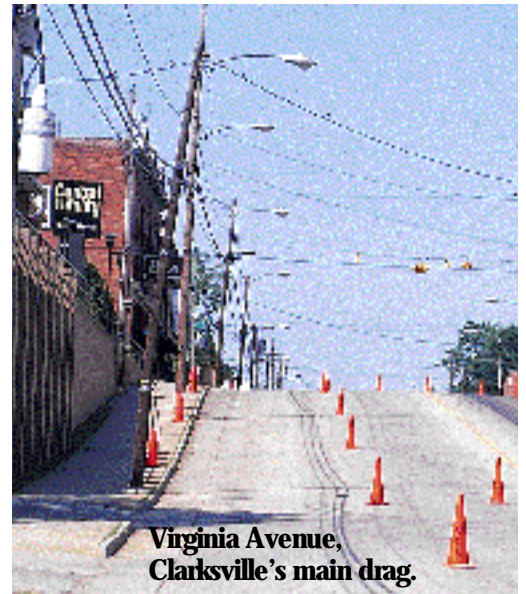
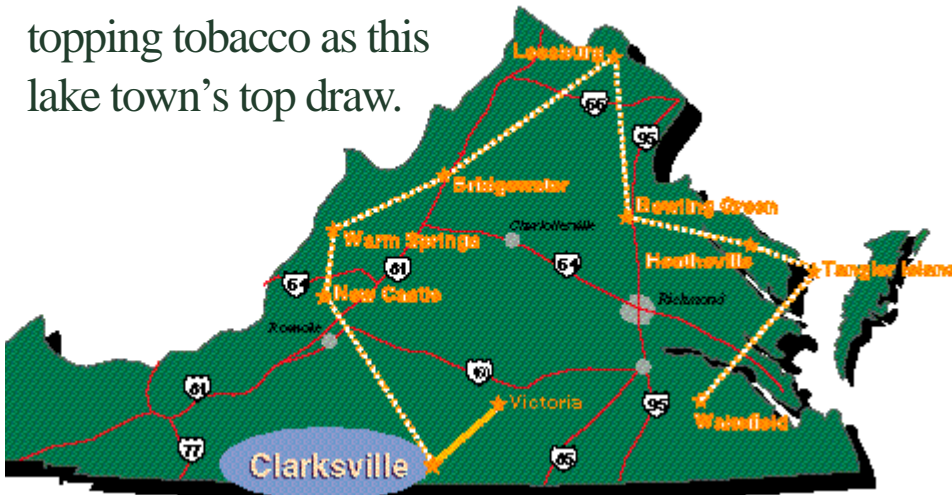
DOWN HOME SERIES

by Robert Grossman, Feature Writer

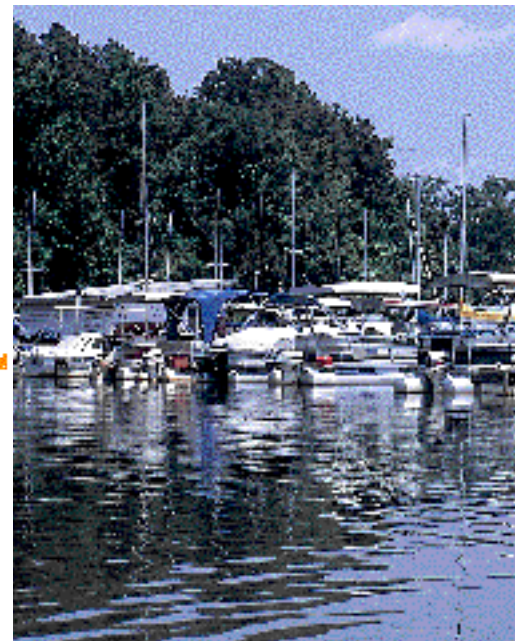
During 1997, we'll make our way around Virginia, each month visiting a small town and meeting some of the folks who make up the heart of electric co-op country. On this tour's second stop, we'll be...

Down Home in *Clarksville*

Tourism's smokin' —
topping tobacco as this
lake town's top draw.



Virginia Avenue,
Clarksville's main drag.



Outboard engines drone in the distance on Buggs Island Lake. Fishermen remain fixed in studied concentration, waiting for the next challenge to strike. Tourists stroll up and down Virginia Avenue, Clarksville's equivalent to Main Street, looking for their own catch of the day.

Clarksville is all that and more, combining rich history with Buggs Island Lake's 800 miles of shoreline. Clarksville is the only town on the lake, which gets credit for attracting an estimated four million area visitors each year. Tourism has replaced tobacco as the town's claim to fame, creating a stable economy.

It sits about seven miles north of the North Carolina border. The town's popu-

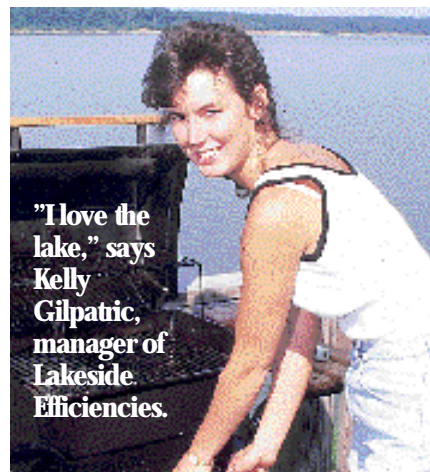
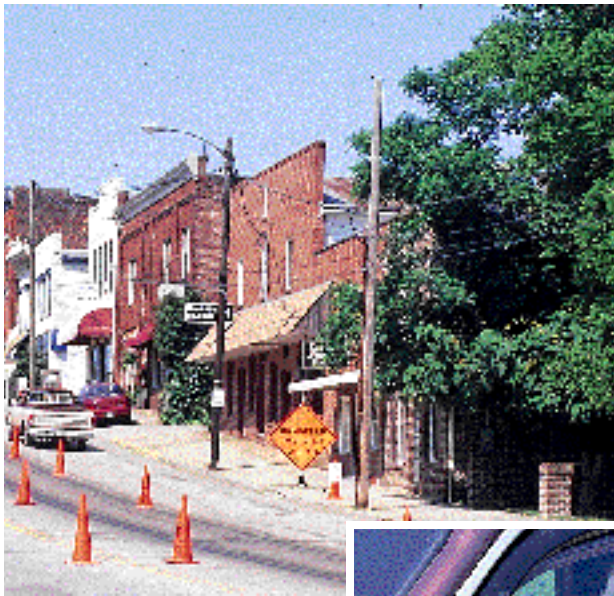
lation is 1,243, with a 3-mile radius population of 4,000.

Putting your finger on the pulse of a tourist locale involves knowing about what you can do for fun. Water skiing, boating, swimming, and fishing — you can do it all. Citation fish caught from the lake include striped bass, largemouth bass, crappie, and white bass. The Red Man, Coors, and Virginia Two Man Federation are included in the list of annual fishing tournaments.

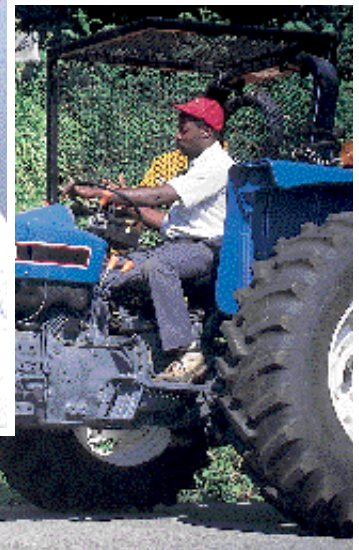
For golfers, there's the Kinderton Country Club. The 18-hole championship golf course, considered one of the top 10 in the state, is host to the Kinderton Invitational. The July event attracts more than 200 players.

History buffs revel in Prestwould, located two miles north of Clarksville on Route 15. The historic plantation overlooks the lake. It was finished in 1795 by Sir Peyton Skipwith, an American-born Baronet, and Lady Jean Skipwith, his second wife. The house, one of the largest and most complex gentry houses in Virginia after its completion, was built with stone quarried on the plantation.

The Virginia Lake Festival, known locally as Lakefest, takes place the third weekend in July. The annual event includes fireworks, street dance, a Pig Pickin' feast, arts and crafts, and a Beach Music Festival. The Occoneechee State Park Native American Heritage Festival



"I love the lake," says Kelly Gilpatric, manager of Lakeside Efficiencies.



"I enjoy it here because of the benefits of my job," says Clarksville foreman Walter Terry.



Waterskiing, boating, swimming, and fishing. You can do it all on Buggs Island Lake.



"I've been all over the world, but to me there isn't a prettier place than right here," says Kathleen Walker, past mayor, town ambassador, and acknowledged mother of the town.

ROBERT GROSSMAN PHOTOS

and Powwow is held every year in Oconeechee State Park on the lake.

Who's That on the Calendar?

The 1996 Independent Life Calendar's July photo features a beautiful woman holding a gavel and a shoo-fly pie. That woman is Kathleen Walker, past mayor, town ambassador, and acknowledged mother of the town. Clarksville is named after her late husband's great-uncle, Clark Royster. He owned the land purchased by the town.

"I've been all over the world, but to me there isn't a prettier place on earth than right here," says Walker, who is quick to point out her love for the town and the people in it.

Walker has a diverse background. She worked as society editor for what's now *The Sun* for 16 years. She owned a beauty shop. Walker and her twin sister, Pauleen Wootton, shared ownership in a ladies specialty shop. It was called The Twin Shop. She now works for Brentwood Manor, a furniture store in town. Walker has lived in Clarksville for 46 years. She remembers when people would pull their horses up to the water trough in the center of town.

More Locals

The sun beats down on Walter Terry as he nudges his tractor along one of Clarksville's roads, cutting grass to help keep the town looking good. Terry, foreman for Clarksville, has lived there all his life. He says he's treated well as an employee of the town.

"I enjoy it here because of the benefits of my job," says Terry.

Down at Lakeside Efficiencies, manager and Mecklenburg Electric Co-op member-consumer Kelly Gilpatric checks people in and tends to the efficiencies. The spring and summer are busy times of year (summer is the busiest), while winters are more relaxed, she explains.

"It's a great town," says Gilpatric. "I love the lake. That's the biggest highlight for me."

Local merchant Dale Hite, vice president of Hite's, Inc., helps customers — men and women — with their clothing and footwear purchases. "The lake brings a lot of people with money," he says. He calls Clarksville "a great place to live and raise a family."

Life around the lake includes the town's industrial base. Textile giant Burlington Industries and world-famous candy maker Russell Stover Candies call Clarksville home.

As for agriculture, the town is the oldest continuous flue-cured tobacco market in the world. Tobacco is sold at auction at three tobacco warehouses.

On a summer night in Clarksville, children laugh with delight as they play on the sidewalk along Virginia Avenue. The twangs of country music are heard as tourists finish their meals and plan for tomorrow. Darkness has taken over, and all is quiet down at the lake. ■