



A Legacy of Manufacturing Innovation and Excellence

The name 'Drexel' is synonymous with the birth and development of the industrial revolution in North Carolina. The furniture and textile activity initiated in Drexel and the surrounding area were important components of the farm to factory transition that began during the Reconstruction Period after the Civil War.

In 1898 Samuel Huffman and D.B. Mull purchased land in the heart of Burke County at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains just east of Morganton along the Norfolk and Southern rail line. Here where a wagon track intersected the railroad, Huffman established a lumber mill and flour mill which supported a small settlement. This community was named Drexel after Anthony Joseph Drexel, a Philadelphia financier and philanthropist, who served on the Norfolk and Southern Board. (A.J. Drexel later became partners with J.P. Morgan and was credited with establishing the financial organization and operations of Wall Street.) In 1903, Huffman, with the help of a group of Morganton businessmen, founded a furniture factory on the sawmill site to take advantage of the supply of virgin hardwood timber in the area. The Drexel Furniture Factory, begun with an initial investment of \$14,000, was to become one of the world's largest furniture manufacturers. The furniture factory, along with the Drexel Knitting Mills Company, were to be the mainstays of the local economy for the remainder of the 20th century. The Town of Drexel was granted a charter to incorporate on February 5 1913.

The Town's manufacturing legacy and its strong, consistent support of business and industry make it an ideal location for companies seeking a highly profitable, low-cost operating environment, a productive and reliable workforce, ample infrastructure, exceptional business services, low taxes, and effective and efficient government operations. A variety of safe and friendly neighborhoods have first-class educational facilities, modern healthcare services, and numerous recreation and cultural resources, all easily accessible.

Although the small town charm and allure is carefully preserved, the Town resides in the 4th largest metropolitan region in the state, the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA, with its wide array of industrial and commercial centers. The greater metro area provides a wide variety of activities: from the outstanding scenic attractions in the west, through the historically and culturally significant Catawba River Valley, to the east where the southeast's furniture shopping Mecca lies along US 321 between Lenoir and Hickory. And, with convenient access to the population centers of Charlotte and Asheville, there is the widest possible range of urban amenities within easy reach. Drexel is indeed a hidden treasure and one of the finest small towns in western North Carolina.

Incorporated: 1913
2006 population: 1,918
County: Burke
www.ci.drexel.nc.us

Drexel Utilities:

- Electricity
- Water
- Wastewater

Major Employers:

- Autumn Care
- Burke County Schools
- Miami Threads

Transportation:

- Major highway routes serving Drexel: I-40, I-77 (40 mi to E) and NC 70
- Air: Hickory Regional Airport (16 mi), Charlotte Douglas International Airport (61 mi), Asheville Regional Airport (68 mi)
- Rail: Norfolk Southern Railway



INTERESTING FACTS

Two scheduled events are held at the Drexel Fairgrounds each year. In August, the Drexel Fair Board organizes a free agricultural fair that has been held for nearly 60 years and has received accolades from the NC Dept. of Agriculture. The fair lasts one week and offers rides, games, exhibits, music and more. The Fair Board also organizes a free carnival one week each May and provides rides, games, food and fun for the whole family.

In the northern portion of Burke County to the northwest of Drexel is the largest canyon east of the Grand Canyon. The Linville Gorge offers hiking, backpacking and rock climbing. Trails through the area lead to majestic overlooks and waterfalls. Linville Gorge is within the Daniel Boone Wildlife Management Area which is a part of the 50,000 acre Pisgah National Forest.

To the south of Drexel lies the largest state park in North Carolina. South Mountains State Park is 6000+ acres offering hiking and horseback riding, camping and picnicking. Clearly marked trails take visitors through dense forested areas including a magnificent waterfall.

Several outstanding recreational areas, including Lake James in the western part of the county, and Lake Rhodhiss in the eastern part of the county, are recognized for their excellent fishing, boating and swimming. Lake James, the larger of the two with 154 miles of shoreline, is the first lake along the Catawba River chain. A state park is located on the lake offering swimming, fishing, canoeing and picnic facilities.

The Drexel area is blessed with a rich folk and bluegrass musical heritage. Residents and visitors can enjoy free Friday night outdoor concerts that take place just minutes away from Drexel in Morganton and Valdese during the summer. These programs attract music lovers who enjoy everything from bluegrass to symphonies. Both Morganton and Valdese hold annual festivals that attract thousands of spectators in August and September.



An Abundance of Natural Beauty

Drexel has the great fortune of being located where the rolling hills of the Piedmont blend with the Blue Ridge Mountains and Pisgah National Forest. To the south of Town lies the South Mountains and the largest State Park in North Carolina. This topography offers the unexcelled beauty of spectacular mountain landscapes, fertile green valleys, flowing streams and waterfalls, large inviting lakes and scenic forests. There is something for every outdoor enthusiast and nature lover from remote wilderness areas to beautiful vacation properties with all the modern conveniences.

Outdoor recreation adventures can include a relaxed drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway; jogging, biking, or walking along the many miles of greenways and trails; boating, fishing, and swimming on the waters of pristine lakes and rushing streams; or strenuous rock climbing in the Linville Gorge. There's a number of challenging golf courses nearby, and whitewater rafting and skiing is only a short drive away. It's an outdoor paradise for all ages.

A Sanctuary for Retirees

For active retirees seeking peace, quiet and access to resources and services for older adults, Drexel rivals any retirement community in the country. Drexel and Burke County have consistently been recognized and highly ranked by retirement oriented publications as a top destination for retirees. The temperate climate conducive to year-round outdoor activities, the natural resources of the area, medical services, real estate options, recreational, cultural and shopping opportunities provide a much sought after quality of life found in few places. The safety, lack of congestion, and low cost of living offer unparalleled comfort, security and convenience. Friendly neighborhoods, community pride, and cultural and recreational programming add to the welcoming environment. Drexel provides all that retirees need to get more out of life in their later years.

