

Public Power Profile | Granite Falls, NC

The first use of electricity in Caldwell County happened in Granite Falls on December 5, 1888. Dignitaries in Granite Falls threw the switch less than ten years after Thomas Alva Edison invented the first incandescent electric light bulb. Seventeen years passed before any other area of the county acquired electric power. As a public power community, the Town's Electric Department provides a reliable power supply to its customers at stable and competitive rates with customer service and reliability that are second to none. The Electric Department was designated a Reliable Public Power Provider (RP₃) by American Public Power Association in 2007.

Granite Falls has developed a new recreation area known as Lakeside Park. The 72-acre site on scenic Lake Rhodhiss was acquired to protect the Town's public water supply and provide additional recreational opportunities for its residents. The Park features numerous trails for walking, hiking, and mountain biking, and also offers fishing decks, a canoe launch and picnic shelters. The facilities have been strategically placed to provide outstanding views of the scenery and wildlife indigenous to the lake. The park was named a NC Birding Trail in May 2008.

Granite Falls is part of the "20 Miles of Furniture" located on US 321 between Hickory and Lenoir which is a renowned furniture shopping area. Nearly all major manufacturers have stores along this corridor in addition to a multitude of smaller, lesser known companies that also produce top-quality furnishings.

Just to the northwest of Granite Falls are the 50,000-acre Pisgah National Forest and the wilderness area of Wilson Creek, a federally-designated "Wild and Scenic River". Thirty percent of Caldwell County is open to the public, and half of that is nationally-protected park land. This provides a wide variety of natural beauty and year-round outdoor activities.



Unspoiled Beauty Alongside Modern Amenities

Surrounded by an abundance of natural beauty, culture and history, Granite Falls has an extremely fortunate geographic location. Strategically located where the Piedmont meets the Mountains, it benefits from its proximity to the population centers of Charlotte, Asheville and Winston-Salem while being only a short distance from vast expanses of open land offering mountain vistas, lush valleys, flowing streams, large inviting lakes and scenic forests. Within easy reach of urban amenities, the Town offers a more relaxed quality of life that is wonderfully suited for everyone from young families to active retirees seeking peace, quiet and access to the many outdoor recreation adventures available.

The contrasts are spectacular. The US 321 thoroughfare through Granite Falls is a major four-lane highway that divides the County, reaching from the river in the south to the mountains in the north, connecting the wide array of resources and services available within the greater Hickory metropolitan area. While, just a few miles to the west of this corridor, can be found a remote and scenic wilderness area where one can escape into a completely different world. It's the perfect location for those who love nature, enjoy outdoor activities or just want more out of life.

Remembering and Respecting the Past

The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum opened to the public in January 2007. The Town purchased the historic residence of one of their original founders, Andrew Baird, to house the museum. The Baird House was built in the 1790s and is the second oldest home in Caldwell County. With the assistance of funds from the North Carolina Department of Transportation Enhancement Grant program, the home was carefully restored, and sidewalks and bike paths were added to provide easy access to the museum and its exhibits. Among the items displayed are local historical artifacts and transportation-related memorabilia.

The Museum authentically represents the people and events of the past and present and is an example of the effort of the Town to help residents and visitors enjoy the discovery of Granite Falls' unique identity as derived from its history.



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Incorporated: 1889
2006 population: 4,845
County: Caldwell
www.granitefallsnc.com

Granite Falls Utilities:

- Electricity
- Water
- Wastewater

Major Employers:

- Associated Hardwoods, Inc.
- Brockford Inn
- Caldwell County Schools
- Camelot Manor Nursing Facility
- Fair Value Stores
- Granite Hardwoods, Inc.
- Jordon-Holman Lumber Co.
- NEPTCO
- Pregis, Inc.
- Wal-Mart Super Center

Transportation:

- Major highway routes serving Granite Falls: I-40, US 321 and US 321-A
- Air: Hickory Regional Airport (15 min), Charlotte Douglas International Airport (1 hr)
- Rail: Caldwell County Railroad

A Century of Steady Progress

The Town of Granite Falls' history dates back before the Revolutionary War, beginning with colonial land grants issued in the mid 1700s as settlers began moving westward out of the Piedmont. In 1791, an early pioneer, Andrew Baird, purchased all the land now occupied by the Town as a site for an iron works, using the power of the creek for energy. When the forge closed, the settlement founded by Baird was sustained by the introduction of a cotton mill, Shuford Mills, Inc., in 1880 and began to expand further with the arrival of the railroad in 1884. A lumber mill was introduced in 1890 and the Town was incorporated in 1899.

The economy of Granite Falls and the surrounding areas of Caldwell County has grown from one that began with cotton and lumber and has evolved over time to a more diversified structure combining traditional manufacturing with more modern, technically-sophisticated industries. There has been a major shift from labor-intensive operations to more high-tech textile manufacturing techniques. The abundant hardwood resources of the Appalachian forest and the workmanship and productivity of the early furniture craftsmen supported a growing wood-working industry which continues to maintain a major presence in the local economy. Caldwell County furniture and home furnishings products are shipped all over the world. More recently, new investment in plant and equipment for such items as plastics, automotive components, industrial lifts, fiber optics, packaging and medical supplies has introduced greater variety to the area's industrial mix. Among the early enterprises established in the Town was the Bank of Granite, founded in 1906. The bank has served small communities in the western half of North Carolina for over a hundred years and received numerous accolades throughout its history.

Continued economic development success is virtually guaranteed. Aside from its unparalleled natural beauty, weather and quality of life, the business climate excels due to its productive workforce; low land and construction costs; minimal operating expenses; access to markets; transportation network; and low taxes. Warm, friendly neighborhoods have access to excellent education facilities, healthcare, cultural and recreational activities. Government services, infrastructure and operations are of the highest quality. The surrounding scenic and recreation areas have been referred to collectively as an 'outdoor oasis' and 'sportsman's paradise'. It's easy to see why individuals and families from all over choose to live, work and play in this exceptional location.

