

Community Pride Suits these Residents to a T

By Diane Daniel, Boston Globe Correspondent, December 17, 2003

DURHAM, N. C. -- If Durham had a pep squad, Jennifer Donner and Michelle Lee could be the cocaptains. The women own the Untidy Museum, a cheery store that sells vintage clothing and modern-day cool gifts and garb. They're about as energetic as two people can be, but, Lee said, they were getting tired of the reaction they often encountered when they told people where their store was.

"They'd say, 'Where are y'all located?' And when we said, 'Durham,' they'd go, 'Oh... Durham,'" Lee said. "That's how the shirt came to be. The shirt happened in like 30 seconds." "The shirt" is a T-shirt that the women designed, with a big red heart and emblazoned with their cheer: "Durham Love Yourself." Within a few days of printing it up this fall, they sold two dozen, at \$20 each. They have since restocked dozens more in several colors, sizes, and two styles. "We both love Durham," said Donner, 43, who moved here from the Midwest 17 years ago. Lee, 34, came from Richmond, Va., five years ago. "I have four kids and Michelle has three," she said. And, yes, their children attend public schools.

"Durham gets a bad rap. Maybe it's the blue-collar tobacco thing," Donner said. "I just think Durham has outgrown that reputation."

The shirts have been most popular among longtime residents, "Dukies," musicians, and adolescent girls, Donner said.

A 20-year resident, Danny Cameron, was one of the first. "I loved having a team-spirit kind of shirt to wear," said Cameron, an artist who, until recently, owned Cameron's, a contemporary gift shop in Chapel Hill. "It's ironic to me that the people who live here in Durham love it, but people who don't live in Durham have this perception of, 'Ugh, you don't want to live there.' He says Durham attracts people "more adventurous, accepting, and diverse" than do its neighboring Research Triangle communities.

"When I saw the shirt, I told Jennifer she should call the downtown officials," he said.

Reyn Bowman, president and chief executive officer of the Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau, agrees that the shirt and the slogan are good for the city, and that it's the outsiders who give Durham a bad name. He even has the polling data to prove it: An attitude assessment the city conducts yearly through Digiton Corp. found that almost half the people from nearby Wake County, home to Raleigh, are negative about Durham.

"Durham's self-image has been incredibly strong," he said. "Negativity and condescension are very assaultive, and [the poll takers have] been amazed that our image stays so strong. You can't create that pride, so I just thank God it's there."

Variety Adds Spice to this Barbecue

DURHAM, N. C. -- Someday there could be a Q near you. But for now, Scott Howell and his two partners are focusing the growth of their outstanding Q-Shack barbecue joints in the South. Howell, 40, earned celebrity chef status here with the upscale Nana's, one of the area's foodie favorites. After he bought the building that Nana's is in, he found himself with additional space and decided to go downscale in price and ambience, but certainly not in quality. "We wanted to do a place where we would like to eat -- the guys I work with and the guys that cook around here," he said. "We always get together and do pigs and stuff and drink beer. It seemed like a good fit."

Indeed, the Q-Shack leads a new generation of North Carolina barbecue restaurants. The old school sticks to whatever meat the region prescribes. In the eastern part of the state, it's the whole hog, chopped and smothered in vinegar. In the west, it's the shoulder, and the vinegar is mixed with a tomato sauce. And then there are the Southern home-cooking side orders; Howell calls them homestyle. At the Q-Shack, the meat comes from all over. There's hickory-smoked pork butt; chili-rubbed beef brisket, Texas style; mesquite-smoked chicken and turkey; St. Louis-cut pork ribs; and mesquite-smoked beef sausage. Plates (\$7.50-\$8.50) come with two sides and hush puppies; sandwiches (\$4.95-\$6.50) come with one side and the pups.

The brisket and pork butt, Howell said, are cooked "overnight real slow." The pork is hand-pulled, with no gristle or fat, and the attention to detail is evident in each bite.

Among the favorite dishes is, believe it or not, a salad. The Q-Cobb salad (\$5.95) is romaine lettuce and peppers with smoked chicken, beef brisket, avocado, hard-boiled egg, tomatoes, and a choice of homemade ranch dressing or chipotle blue cheese, served with a few homemade hush puppies, of course.

Side dishes (\$1.50) are homemade potato salad made with new potatoes and chopped eggs; sliced cole slaw that's not too sweet or creamy; barbecued beans; and macaroni and cheese. The fried okra is one of the few things that are frozen, but you'd never know. The Q-Shack makes its own ice cream, and the "fried pies," like fruit turnovers, are made daily by the pastry chef at Nana's. Beverages include beer and the regional cherry-flavored soda Cheerwine. And, of course, there's iced tea.

The original shack, self-serve, has some outdoor and porch seating; tables with benches are inside. The pig logo is all over, and a large, colorful abstract pig painting graces one wall.

As the franchise grows (there's now one in Raleigh, with more on the way), so will its dining options, Howell said, perhaps in the form of a full-service restaurant. The challenge, of course, will be to retain its down-home appeal and upscale quality.

The Q-Shack, 2510 University Drive, 919-402-4227. Open daily.

Tobacco Road's Fresh Air

DURHAM, N. C. -- Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill. They're often said in the same breath, and they do share a Metropolitan Statistical Area, the resources of Research Triangle Park (largely in Durham), and an airport. But they're quite different, and not all that close. From Durham, Raleigh is 25 miles away, and Chapel Hill 12. Of the three, Durham is said to be most loved by residents and most knocked by neighbors. Why the bad rap? When smoking lost its popularity, so did Durham. The city's tobacco empire toppled, wiping out its income.

Nowadays, while it's true that the downtown business district and some neighborhoods have small patches of abandoned buildings and boarded-up homes, for every block of blight, for every abandoned tobacco warehouse, there's an area of rehabilitation and reconstruction. With an urban population (196,000) that's almost equally black and white, and a growing number of Mexican immigrants, it's saddening but not surprising that "diversity" is cited as the main reason folks stay away, according to a survey the city conducted.

Those who live here, though, love Durham for its diversity along with its civic spirit, Duke University, outstanding restaurants, lively farmers' market, thriving arts community, and the wildly popular Duke basketball and Durham Bulls baseball teams. In 1997, the magazine *Utne Reader* named Durham one of the country's "most enlightened cities" because of its urban renewal and social programs. In fact, with Durham's broad socioeconomic and racial mix and a number of activists and lesbians, it could be the Triangle's Southern-style Jamaica Plain.

Because midstate Durham isn't close to North Carolina's beaches or mountains, the city has put its energy into its heritage. Indeed, the way to best appreciate Durham's present is to examine its past. To get in the mood, enjoy a glass of sweet tea (iced, naturally) and listen for the wonderful whistles of the trains that travel through downtown several times a day.

Two historic sites tell hundreds of stories. The Duke Homestead and Tobacco Museum, housed together, top most travelers' lists and are well worth the short drive from the center of town. Thanks to a cigarette-rolling machine, Washington Duke and family operated the largest tobacco empire in the world in the late 1800s; it became the American Tobacco Co. Antitrust laws forced the monopoly to break up, forming such companies as R. J. Reynolds and Liggett & Myers. The family's 1852 farmhouse and

tobacco barns are still standing. The museum offers a remarkable look back at tobacco growing and manufacturing in Durham and statewide and has a great collection of memorabilia. The company's best-known tobacco was Bull Durham, which gave Durham its nickname "Bull City," and hence the Durham Bulls minor-league team, the inspiration for the classic 1988 movie "Bull Durham."

A few miles up the road in Durham County is Historic Stagville, once among the largest plantation holdings in the South with more than 30,000 acres. At one point in the mid-1800s, as many as 900 slaves lived there. Now, with the main house, and, on another site, slave quarters and barn still standing, it is like a ghost town, conjuring images of a captive yet vibrant and creative community. Only recently have interpretive signs been erected, and the site manager is working to return the buildings to their original period appearance.

Downtown Durham, with a wealth of red brick buildings, is rich in history as well. From April to November, you can take free guided tours on the histories of tobacco, civil rights, and architecture. Also available is a self-guided tour and an African-American heritage map. (You can get maps from the Convention & Visitors Bureau, 101 E. Morgan St., 800-446-8604, www.durham-nc.com.) At one time, the black community here was one of the country's strongest entrepreneurial forces; one area was known as Black Wall Street. Still here are the NC Mutual Life Insurance Co., the country's largest black-owned financial institution, and North Carolina Central University, the nation's first publicly funded liberal arts college for African-Americans. The new Hayti Heritage Center is the community's cultural and arts center.

Like many cities, Durham is pushing a downtown revival. The most ambitious venture is the American Tobacco project, a development of 1 million square feet of downtown industrial space into restaurants, homes, and businesses. A similar project is West Village, which is renovating five tobacco warehouses in the west end of Durham, in the historic Brightleaf District. Their completed apartments are all occupied. Brightleaf Square, a popular spot for shopping and night life, was the first tobacco warehouse area renovated, in 1981. It is being updated. Another downtown landmark is the new Durham Bulls Athletic Park, its brick facade blending in with the tobacco warehouses. The old park is the site of the popular Durham Blues Festival.

Near Duke is Ninth Street, a small strip of bookstores, cafes, restaurants, and shops. Two of the city's best restaurants are on Ninth -- Vin Rouge, a recently opened French bistro; and Magnolia Grill. Magnolia shares the limelight with Nana's, equally stellar though a little off the beaten path. Next to Nana's is the Q-Shack, an upscale barbecue joint. Even more out of the way but worth seeking out is Four Square Restaurant, housed in a 1908 Neoclassical Revival Victorian.

When the Duke family amassed its wealth in tobacco, it endowed Trinity College and changed the name. Today, Duke University is one of the nation's top schools, with several medical facilities, a student population of 12,000, and 24,000 workers -- making it the city's largest employer. Duke's neogothic architecture is most proudly on display at

the school's chapel, which has a 210-foot tower, a 50-bell carillon, and a 5,200-pipe organ. Another popular spot is the Sarah P. Duke Gardens on 55 acres in the heart of the university's West Campus.

Because of its medical facilities and the many health-related research sites at Research Triangle Park, Durham now has the name "City of Medicine," ironic given its nicotine-fueled past.

(See below for details of Diane Daniel's visit to Durham.)

Durham Weekend Visit Itinerary

Friday

6 p.m. Check-in at [Morehead Manor](#), 914 Vickers Ave. 919-687-4366. \$115-\$180.

Don't worry; there's no smoking in this Colonial Revival style B&B that was built for the CEO of Liggett & Myers.

7 p.m. New South. [Magnolia Grill](#), 1002 Ninth St. 919-286-3609. \$18 to \$26. At the Triangle's most celebrated upscale restaurant, try innovative American fare.

Saturday

10 a.m. Morning smoke. [Duke Homestead & Tobacco Museum](#), 2828 Duke Homestead Road. 919-477-5498. Free. Visit the farm of the family whose name became synonymous with the US tobacco industry and Durham. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

11:30 a.m. Haunting history. [Historic Stagville](#), 5828 Old Oxford Highway. 919-620-0120. Free. Walk the grounds of what was once among the largest plantation holdings in the South, at one point home to more than 900 slaves. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

1 p.m. Breaking bread. [Ninth Street Bakery](#), 136 E. Chapel Hill St. 919-286-0303. At this local favorite, try sandwiches (\$5) served on fresh-baked organic bread, or pizza slices from \$1.50.

2 p.m. Do downtown. [Convention & Visitors Bureau](#), 800-446-8604. Stroll Main Street over to Brightleaf Square. Downtown Walking Tour Map and African-American Heritage Map are available by calling CVB or downloading from the website.

7 p.m. Deluxe dining. [Four Square](#), 2701 Chapel Hill Road. 919-401-9877. \$18.50-\$30. Indulge in outstanding contemporary American cuisine, such as pecan-crusted rack of lamb, served in a beautifully restored 1908 "four-square" house.

Sunday

11 a.m. Campus crawl. [Duke University Sarah P. Duke Gardens](#), Anderson Street. 919-684-3698. Start on the West Campus at Duke Chapel, where an interdenominational service is held at 11, and then head to the gardens.

1 p.m. Q-ing up. The Q-Shack, 2510 University Drive. 919-402-4227. \$4.95 to \$8.50. Get your new-generation barbecue here: a variety of meat styles with healthy side dishes.