

FEATURED ARTICLE IN *THE DAILY COURIER*

November 2010

Timeless Values at General Store By Jean Gordon

BOSTIC—Washburn General Store will open at its regular time today, Black Friday, and will close at 4:30 p.m., so no one has to show up at 4 a.m.

Ann Washburn Hutchins expects the regular flow of customers Friday, as well as the Christmas shoppers. Retired three years ago from teaching at Sunshine school, Ann is the first to arrive in the morning with the store dog, Archie.

Saturday, two days after the store was featured on UNC-TV, there were plenty of tourists.

A Greenville, S.C., couple who was in Forest City, stopped to ask directions to Cherry Mountain Street as they were [en route] to Washburn Store. They had seen the television show and could hardly wait to get there.

For weeks now Hutchins has been packing Christmas candy in plastic bags.

“I can’t sleep at night for carpal tunnel and having to pack all this candy,” she said.

Ed Washburn ordered 68 cases of Christmas candy, and it’s up to Ann to unpack all the boxes and make separate bags of traditional Christmas candy.

Beside the traditional peppermint sticks, other favorites are coconut bon bons, peanut brittle, orange slices, maple nut clusters, vanilla nut clusters, peanut squares, molasses mint, grape, pineapple, strawberry, peppermint, wintergreen, peach, peanut butter, and lemon sticks. Horehound candy is still a favorite Christmas candy.

“We cannot keep this,” she said, “We are almost out again.”

Another favorite of Christmas shoppers is a large array of John Deere toys, clothing, and household items, such as clocks.

“This seems to have picked up this year, too”

There are 96 sleds for sale as well as other toys.

A local woman sews “Little House on the Prairie” type bonnets and homemade aprons. “She takes all the money she makes from this and gives it to the mission offering at her church,” Hutchins said.

“One woman from Connecticut came by the other day on her way home for Thanksgiving,” Hutchins began. “She bought one of the bonnets and said she is wearing in the airport to meet her family. She told us when she gets off the plane she’ll say, ‘Hey, Y’all,’ dressed in her bonnet.”

Other Christmas gift favorites are the Red Enamel and Speckle Enamel dishes, Corinthian Bells; overalls, Lodge cast-iron skillet and other cast iron items.

There is an apple cider mill, a round butter churn, a wine press and a grist mill, and weather vanes for sale. “And these sell,” she said.

“Sometimes brother[s] or sisters will come in and put their money together to buy something for daddy,” she said.

One family who bought a weather vane later shot a photograph of the vane being installed on the house and sent it to Washburn.

Ann Hutchings believes in shopping local, and she and her husband, Bill, have been trying new restaurants in Forest City.

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“We trade with them and then they trade with us.”

No tour buses are scheduled for Black Friday, although it wouldn't be unusual for a tour bus to show up.

“We had three in one day,” she said. “Thursdays are usually tour-buss days.”

People from across the country, state, and Southeast come to Washburn's General Store because it is different than a lot of other stores.

And while tourists enjoy the items not found in other places, the locals come daily for necessities such as oil, and food. “In this economy, they buy the things they need,” she said. “A man came in the other day for roofing cement.” Near the front of the store are jars of canned jelly, relish, chow chow, cider and sauces.

“We sent a case of one of everything to Jacksonville, Fla., last week,” Hutchins said. Since it is all North Carolina grown, the shopper was sending the case to a North Carolina friend.

“We are selling more marbles than ever before,” she said. “Grandparents come in and want to buy toys for their grandkids they used to play with. They want to get them away from the videos and computers,” Ann said.

On the shelf with the marbles are Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs, Gismos and other toys shoppers may have looked over [for] such things [as] iPods, iPads, cell phones, and video games. Such electronics are not available at Washburn General Store.

Lunch shoppers, even on Black Friday, can have a fresh-made bologna sandwich on white bread with mayo, mustard, onion, lettuce and tomato, or a chunk of hoop cheese. The sandwiches are prepared by Ann or her parents.

“We close on church days, Wednesday and Sunday,” Hutchins said. “But we're open all the other days from 9 until 4:30,” she said.