

WASHBURN'S

General Store & Community

Open 9am-4:30pm Monday-Saturday, except Wed

828.245.4129 or www.WashburnStore.com

2426 Bostic Sunshine Hwy
Bostic, North Carolina 28018

FEATURED ARTICLE IN *SPARTANBURG HERALD-JOURNAL*

May 1994

General Store Maintains Friendly Service Tradition

By Betsy Peoples

BOSTIC, N.C. – Just about whatever country item you have in mind, Washburn's General Store is bound to have it.

Aladdin Lamps, butter molds, overalls and horse collars are some of the things the old-fashioned general store still stocks.

The store is at the crossroads of Piney Mountain Church Road and Bostic-Sunshine Highway about five miles outside of Forest City, N.C.

Four generations of Washburns have operated the store since it first opened in 1831.

Benjamin Washburn started the store but later moved to Spindale and sold it to his younger brother, Reuben.

The store was passed from Reuben to his son, Nollie, then to his grandson, E.N., then to his great-grandson, Edward, who now runs it.

The foundation for running the store has not changed much over the years, Edward Washburn said.

"We still try to base the store on what we've always done — good friendly and dedicated service."

The Washburns never tried to expand the store, besides moving the building across the street to make room for a house, where Edward's mother, Margaret, still lives.

Washburn, 64, returned to Bostic after graduating from Wofford College in 1955. Today, he and his wife, Catherine spend their time between the general store and the family-owned funeral home next door.

The store is frequented by locals, including Washburn's childhood friends. Every morning around 8, a group of about 10 men gathers faithfully for Catherine's coffee on a small bench in the store. If it's one of the gentlemen's birthdays you'll find muffins or cake to accompany their coffee.

The bench they occupy faces an old-time well pump, the kind a person would heave up and down for water. Surrounding them are other antique items set to decorate the store.

"We've been coming in here every morning for more than 20 years to catch up on all the daily gossip. We tell what we did the day before and what we plan on doing that day with a little exaggeration," Jimmy Holland said laughingly.

The general store has built a reputation for having an open-door policy.

"People appreciate it when you talk to them," Washburn said. "I don't care how much time it takes up, we will always have time to talk to people."

Many of the customers call the Washburns on the phone to find out if they can order various items direct, such as bottoms for a rocker.

Washburn's general reply is "sure, no problem. It will be here for you soon."

Some people say the store is like an old grandmother who has everything and anything you can think of when you want it, Washburn said.

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The Washburns have continued their tradition of providing sandwiches for construction people working in the area and others who want a taste of Wisconsin hoop cheese, the kind you keep under wraps for a year before it's ready for tasting, along with country ham, luncheon meat and bologna between a slice of bread.

Washburn also makes a concerted effort to order items direct from the companies who make them. Piles of stick candy out of Bristol, Tenn., grace the candy aisle.

Washburn prides himself in having related items of purchase. For example, if you buy a jar, jar sealer is on the shelf beside it and you cannot buy seeds without the fertilizer.

"It's just the simple way of doing business. If you buy horseshoes, you'll need nails," Washburn said.

Never underestimating the needs of his customers, Washburn has a basement full of goods.

"Sometimes people want to come through and want to take more than one of something," Washburn said. "One time a couple traveling from Jacksonville, Fla., stopped and wanted to take a wood stove...along with some other things."

"He said he couldn't find one like it, so he took the luggage out of the car and tried to make it fit," Washburn said. "I shipped it to him instead."

Many of the customers say they'd rather do their grocery, hardware and odds and ends shopping at the general store than at some of the larger stores because of the "home-like" atmosphere and friendly attitude of the Washburns.

"You can find some of the rarest things in here," McGee said.