

Store is steeped in history

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

The history of the Camp Sherman Store is peopled with both familiar and lesser-known names. After Frank Leithauser built the first permanent building in 1917 to house the store, in 1922 Ross Ornduff of Moro removed that building and constructed the present store.

The post office was housed in the store with mail delivered from April to September, and Ornduff was named the first postmaster.

Rod and Evelyn Foster ran the store from 1925 to 1940. In 1928 the post office became a year-round operation. During the Fosters' 15 years, the store had 32-volt electricity from a turbine across the river that provided power for the store refrigerator, an iron, and a small heater in the house.

Local Camp Sherman resident and builder Luther Metke owned the store during World War II, and his daughter Mae Dodd was the proprietor. Mary Lou Loar owned the store for a number of years until the 1990s. New gas pumps were installed in 1993 to the relief of the residents.

In 1976 the separate post office was added onto the store building. The old-fashioned interior was salvaged from an old post office elsewhere in Oregon that was being replaced. Stepping into the post office is like stepping back in time.

The land on which the store sits in Tract G is leased from the U.S. Forest Service, like the cabins along the river. On the store shelves is an amazing variety of foodstuffs, camping supplies, clothing, gift items, and, of course, a whole section devoted to supplying the needs of the fly-fishers.

Current proprietors Roger and Kathy White think part of the reason Camp Sherman, and the store, has been able to retain its unique character and ambiance is due to the fact the Forest Service controls the land.

"The Forest Service keeps the (Metolius) basin here the same," he explained.

The Whites have done their part to maintain the integrity of the store that has served generations of families over the years. Walking into it today is not that different than it was in the 1950s.

Roger and Kathy both think Camp Sherman is "the happiest place on earth." They both expressed their belief that the cosmic

energy and synchronicity in this piece of paradise is what makes it so special to so many people.

Roger laughs when he hears people who have discovered Camp Sherman express their desire to keep it a secret.

When queried about plans for retirement, Roger hedges some, saying, "It's a moving target." They have purchased a cabin down river a little for when the time comes.

For now, they are in the thick of their high season, which runs from mid-May to mid-October. In the winter the store is open three days a week. They are already planning their trips to the gift and food shows in New York City, Seattle, and Las Vegas, so that target is definitely still moving.

On the next visit to the Camp Sherman store, sit awhile on the front porch or around the side on the deck. Watch the people, listen for the wind in the pines, notice the sunlight playing off the ripples in that beautiful river, and enjoy the experience of being in this special corner of the world.

100 YEARS: Celebration is set for Saturday, July 7

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and his wife, Chris, owned the store for six years.

Kathy's dad discovered the Metolius and Camp Sherman in the late 1940s when he came over from Portland to hunt. After making his discovery, Kathy's father asked, "Why would we go anywhere else?" From then on, the family station wagon collected red dust every summer from the unpaved road in Camp Sherman.

Roger was born in Virginia surrounded by historic Civil War battlefields, antique shows, and a stop on the Underground Railroad beneath the steps of his 150-year-old church, so history has always been a part of his life. He moved with his family to Salem, Oregon, as a teenager.

In honor of the store's 100th anniversary, the Whites have invited the governor, state senators and representatives, and people who are an integral part of the store's long history. Floyd and Jim Leithauser, whose grandfather Frank built the

first permanent building for the store in 1917, will be in attendance, as will Carrie Loar, whose mother owned the store for a period of time.

"It's pretty amazing this building is still here and intact," Roger said. "In America today, are there many businesses still doing business in the same location after a hundred years?"

The old Shell gas pumps out in front of the store had to be decommissioned and dug up in 1990 when concern over fuel leaking into the river surfaced. To add to the historical flavor of the weekend, Roger has arranged for a 1918 Ford Model A touring car and a 2018 Tesla to be parked nose-to-nose in front of the old pumps. They will be joined throughout the weekend by other antique and classic cars.

The Willamette Valley Vineyards will be on hand from 3 to 6 p.m. for a wine tasting, with the barbecue scheduled to start at 5 p.m. Big Pine and the Pitchtones will be providing music for the evening. Just to be sure the bases are covered, Roger is planning to have enough food for 1,000 people. Carpooling is probably a good idea as parking will be at a premium.

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