

## *The 1812 Country Store - A Bit of Yesteryear Changes Hands.*

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*The 1812 Country Store when Ruth Woodruff owned the store*

To children it's the lure of the penny candy or a scoopful of marbles in a leather pouch; to city folks heading south to view the autumn foliage, it's a pleasant stop along the way; to grandparents, it's the perfect place to buy stocking stuffers from an era gone by; and to everyone in this area, it's a landmark - The 1812 Country Store.

The store, located on Route 15A, just a tad north of Hemlock village closed for the season right after Christmas and will reopen in May. When it does reopen in the spring, it will have a new proprietor.

After over 25 years of owning and managing the business, Ruth Woodruff has sold her stately farm house, 25 acres of land, and The 1812 Country Store. Ruth is particularly pleased that the new owners, Judy and Harry Rapelje, will be living in the residence and continuing the tradition of the store.

No fake replica of the old general store, the 1812 Country Store, has a history worthy of its reputation. The original store building was the barn and animal sheds for the house built in 1812 on property which was part of the Phelps-Gorham Purchase.

During the 1930's the building housed one part of the well-known Roadside Craftsmen, Inc. The Craftsmen operation was started by Ruth's father, Clarence E. Wemett, who following a motor trip to Florida, was taken with the idea of roadside craftsmen and laid out a replica of a Southern primitive pottery along Route 5, near East Bloomfield. Guy Daugherty became the resident potter, often joined by students from the State School of Ceramics at Alfred, one of whom married Ruth's brother, Norris. Later weaving and wood-turning were added as crafts.

In 1931, Arthur Cole from East Aurora set up a second of the roadside craft operations - the Avon Coopersmith.

Meanwhile, in Hemlock, Clarence Curtis became the skilled "smithy" turning out expertly crafted wrought iron pieces. From 1937 until 1942, he was joined by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Manchester, artists and

At holiday time, the store became a treasure house of unusual gifts which one could peruse while listening to the music box sound of old recordings of Christmas music.

Ruth has always had an eye for what would appeal to her clientele. "You don't try and put crystal in a country store," she laughed. Handmade potholders, thorem paintings, catnip balls, old fashioned paper dolls, the variety and price range was endless.

The store also became noted as a haven for "miniature" collectors. One could furnish an entire doll house right down to paintings on the wall and doilies on the tiny tables in one afternoon's visit.

Judy Rapelje hopes to retain the same nostalgic flavor that has become associated with the store over the years. Judy is a craftsman, herself, working in the medias of basket weaving and stained glass. She has done a good deal of volunteer work with the YWCA, 4-H and Girl Scouts and also operated the "Treasures from the Heart" home sale for over two years.

The Rapelje's, who lived in Hilton for 17 years, have already moved into the red farm house at the corner of Route 15A and Big Tree Road, along with their two children, Kurt and Karen.

Harry Rapelje is in the Corporate Relations Department at Eastman Kodak. Sixteen-year-old Kurt plays trumpet in the school band and will be an asset to Livonia's math and computer teams - with computers being his specialty. Thirteen-year-old Karen plays the saxophone and piano and will enjoy the view out her window of the many horses residing at Graywood Farms, as she is an avid horse lover.

Judy first learned of Ruth's desire to sell the store through her parents, Vic and Marion Anderson, who have a summer residence on Gullick Road in Honeoye.

Said Judy of the new venture, "It's really making a dream a reality and I plan to work hard, having had some good training from Mrs. Woodruff to make the 1812 Country Store a continuing success".

Meanwhile, Ruth will be heading to Florida as has been her custom for a number of years. However, she hopes to return in the late spring and perhaps have a summer residence enabling her to visit family and friends in the area.

She has brothers, Mark in Hemlock and Norris in East Bloomfield, and silversmiths of marked ability.

During this time, Ruth Wemett was growing up and pursuing her own talent for arts and crafts. A native of the area, Ruth married and had two sons.

Later in life, Ruth attended Columbia University getting a degree in Occupational Therapy and a Masters in Guidance and Personnel. She married a second time and later returned to the Hemlock area, where she and her husband, C. H. Woodruff purchased the home on Route 15A from her father. The Roadside Craftsmen had disbanded as the older skilled craftsmen passed on.

In the Spring of 1959, the Woodruffs opened The 1812 Country Store which included handmade looms on which Ruth taught weaving. After her husband died six years ago, Ruth continued to operate the store.

Many of the old fixtures which add so much charm to the interior came from a store which had been owned by Miss Behnk in Rush NY. In fact, Miss Behnk, herself made a number of visits to Hemlock to see the new home of her authentic old store fixtures.

Over the years, very little has changed in the interior of the store and people like it that way. Out-of-area visitors all have had their favorites including the sharp, pungent "rat" cheese for which the store is famous. One could sample the cheese with crackers, while admiring the coffee grinder which had come from the old Knapp's Store in Hemlock.

a sister, Mary, in Canandaigua. Her two sons also live in the north. Ross Kenzie is Chairman of the Board of Goldome Band and lives with his wife, Langley and two daughters in Derby, NY; and Allan Kenzie, is resident Senior Vice-President of the Baltimore Five-Office Complex of Merrill-Lynch and resides in Ruxton, Maryland with his wife, Bette, and three children.

Even as Ruth sat at her cluttered desk overlooking the winter scene in her backyard, a gentleman, seeing cars parked, stopped to see if the store was open. Stepping over boxes of inventoried items, Ruth told him that the store was closed for the season. "Oh, see you in the spring, then," he said. Ruth waved and smiled without further explanation. She is confident that come spring, The 1812 Country Store, will once again open its doors to children wanting penny candy and oldsters wanting to just reminisce a little.



Ruth Woodruff in 1985

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*Webmaster's note: My Aunt, Ruth Woodruff, was the original owner of the 1812 Country Store. I have many fond childhood memories of looking through all the knickknacks. One of the things the Country Store was known for was the extra sharp "Rat Trap" cheese, and of course, all the penny candy. Luanne did a very nice job when she took over the business.*