

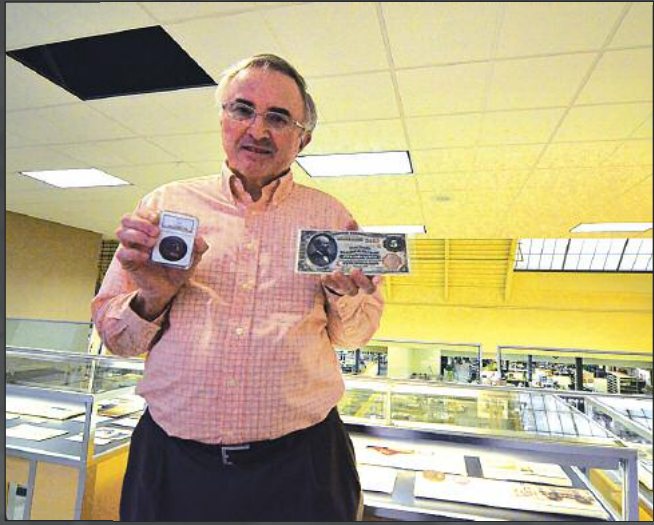
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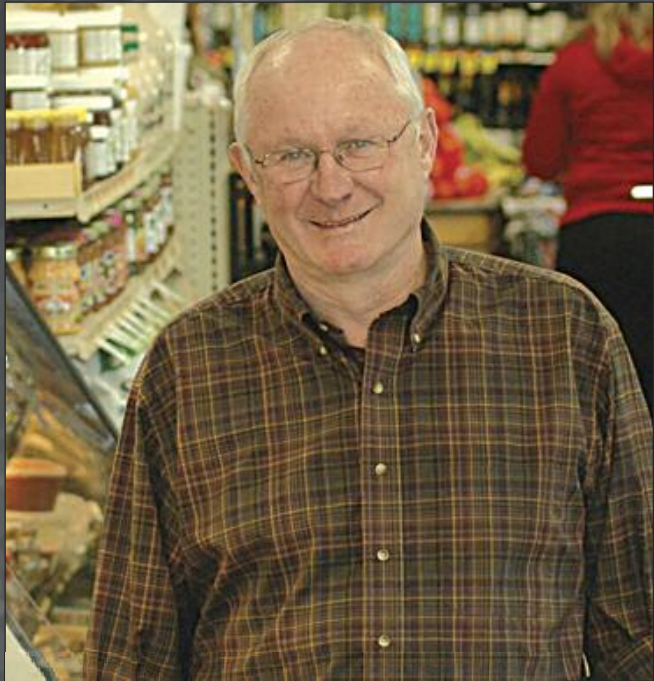
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100 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Maple Grove celebrates 100 years of sweet success that has helped to drive the local economy.

A SWEET CENTURY FOR MAPLE GROVE

BY TODD WELLINGTON
 Staff Writer

It's been 100 years since Katherine Ide Gray and her daughter Helen Gray began experimenting with maple confections at their Northeast Kingdom home.

The hobby soon turned into a successful enterprise which, in turn, grew into what is now the largest packer of pure maple syrup in the United States, the largest manufacturer of maple candies in the world and the producer of the best-selling line of specialty dressings in the nation.

Maple Grove Farms is still located in St. Johnsbury where it employs 75 workers who now produce tens of millions of dollars worth of food products a year at their Portland Street location which get shipped across the country.

The Maple Grove plant has also turned into a bonafide tourist attraction with busloads of maple fans visiting their Sugar House Museum and its signature red-roofed Cabin Gift Shop.

The privately held company was purchased by national food product manufacturer B&G Foods in July of 1998. Plant manager Mark Bigelow said business has been great ever since.

"Phenomenal growth," said Bigelow who went on to say the continued success of Maple Grove over the past century also has a lot to do with its employees.

"It's the great work ethic of our people," said Bigelow. "The stability of our work force."

B&G Foods is based in Parsippany, N.J. In addition to Maple Grove products B&G also sells well-known brands such as Cream of Wheat, Ortega, Mrs. Dash and Pirate's Booty snack food.

B&G President and CEO Bob Cantwell said he's also big fan of the St. Johnsbury plant and its workers.

"The great people of Maple Grove Farms are the secret to the brand's success," said Cantwell. "We are proud of our roots in the St. Johnsbury community and we look forward to many more centuries of success."

According to Bigelow, the Portland Street Maple Grove plant was built in 1926 by George "The Maple King" Carey to manufacture block maple to flavor cigars.

Today, the company buys syrup from suppliers across several states and Canada and then prepares it for sale under the Maple Grove brand.

"We heat it, filter it and bottle it," said Bigelow.

After the Great Depression, Maple Grove diversified into other products to offset the seasonal nature of the maple business.

Maple syrup still accounts for 65 percent of Maple Grove's business. Twenty percent is salad dressings, which the company has been making and selling for 30 years. Bigelow said the most popular flavors have been their raspberry vinaigrette, poppy seed and balsamic

vinaigrette dressings.

The company also makes gluten free and sugar free products such as maple syrup, salad dressings and baking mixes.

Visitors to the Sugar House Museum can learn about the sugaring experience and view the award-winning video, "Vermont's First Industry – Maple Syrup." They can also sample factory-direct maple candies and taste all grades of pure maple syrup. Visitors can also have Maple Grove products packed and shipped as gifts.

According to the company, Maple Grove's origins began when Katharine Ide Gray's daughter Helen came home for the summer from Columbia University where she was studying home economics.

The story was documented in an interview of Katharine Ide Gray by writer Lois Goodwin Greer and published in a 1927 edition of The Vermonter magazine.

"My daughter was a student of Home Economics at Columbia University," she told me," wrote Greer. "The professors were always urging the girls to try out at home the things which they were being taught at the school. Helen thought she would like to do a little experimenting with maple sugar, and incidentally she hoped to find some occupation which would keep her at home. She interested a friend, Miss Ethel McLaren, in her scheme, and I told them to go ahead and do whatever they wished and that I would help them all I could. We worked all one summer, and finally produced some maple candies that were quite delicious.

By experimenting we made our own recipes, which policy we have always pursued."

Together with McLaren, they created recipes for maple candy. A neighbor bought the first box of candy.

"Mrs. Henry Fairbanks telephoned down that she would like some candy, and we were all so excited over it," she said laughing quietly," wrote Greer. "That it required the three of us to pack and wrap the box, and even when Mrs. Fairbanks arrived late in the afternoon we did not have it exactly as we thought it ought to be, and kept wondering all the evening how we could have made it nicer."

Before long the women converted a back shed of the Gray's farm into a candy kitchen.

The little business grew and within four years it became a corporation. Katherine Gray purchased an old mansion to convert it into a factory.

Maple Grove Candies expanded its offerings to include maple syrup and maple cream as well as chocolates. Gray then purchased a maple reconditioning plant which became the basis of a second corporation, Maple Grove Products Vermont.

Gray would later open a restaurant and sales room on 57th Street in New York City.



In 1927, Katharine Ide Gray was featured in "The Vermonter" magazine.



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Walker Motors located on Dartmouth Highway in Woodsville, N.H. has been selling Chrysler products since 1935 and still delivers quality sales and service with a personal touch.

WALKER MOTOR SALES

Walker Family Celebrates 80 Years of Selling Chryslers

BY JAMES JARDINE
Staff Writer

WOODSVILLE, NH — Walker Motors is celebrating 80 years in the new car business. Its history is the story of three men named James Walker.

James Harvey Walker Sr. founded the business in 1935 as a Chrysler dealership.

In 1983, James Sr. retired and James Jr. took over the business.

Current owner James III took over the operation of the business in 2013 when James Jr. retired. Today, the dealership sells Chrysler and Dodge cars, Ram trucks and the popular Jeep family of vehicles.

On April 7, 1969, the business burned down. According to James Jr., the fire came at a very bad time because the business was seriously under-insured. The business, however, survived the fire.

The dealership was located in the central business district of Woodsville in earlier years, but today the modern dealership is located at 4675 Dartmouth College Highway in Woodsville.

James Jr. and his wife Jean are retired from the business now. He recalls working with his father after graduating from Woodsville High School in 1957. For a short time, James Jr. served as a mechanic in the Air National Guard stationed in Burlington. When he began working with his father at the dealership, his first assignment was in the parts department.

Growing up in the business, James Jr. learned every part of the business from his father and handled all the jobs at one time or another. In fact, one job given to him by his father was the

task of teaching customers how to drive. His father, James Jr. said, occasionally sold a car to someone who had never driven and he had the job of teaching the customer how to operate a car.

He says "there are a lot of advantages to being small." He said the reason Walker Motors survives as a small, family-owned business is that the business can maintain a personal approach to selling and servicing cars. The business depends on repeat sales to local community members whose families have been doing business at Walker Motors for generations. He says the Walker approach is low key, with no high pressure tactics.

James III began heading up the sales end of the business in 1986. His brother, Robert Walker, is the dealership's shop foreman and has been heading the service department since 1990.

James III said that the family business remains strong and continues to grow. He confirmed that 80 years after the business began, the personal attention that only a small family business can deliver continues to be the key to success.

One unusual sideline is the Walker Motors history of brokering Red Sox baseball tickets. According to James Jr., he was friends with a sports writer from southern New Hampshire who had access to Red Sox ticket sales. When James Jr. began handling Red Sox tickets, they were not a top team "and nobody wanted to buy a season ticket." As the team's record improved, sales grew stronger and, at one point it seemed like half the phone calls the garage received were from Red Sox fans looking for tickets. Today, James III handles ticket sales.

"There are a lot of advantages to being small."
— James Walker Jr.



Current owner of Walker Motors, James Walker III, stands with his parents, Mrs. Jean Walker and James Walker Jr. who passed on the business to his son in 2013.

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70 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Rodney Sayles clears the snow in front of Sayles Funeral Home in St. Johnsbury.

SAYLES FUNERAL HOME

BY TAYLOR REED
 Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY – Funeral director Rod Sayles, who is actively seeking a successor, has been ushering the dead to infinite rest for decades.

St. Johnsbury-based Desrochers & Sayles Inc., which is owned by Sayles and includes Sayles Funeral Home in St. Johnsbury and Guibord Funeral Home in Lyndonville, is marking its 70th anniversary. Sayles works and lives at the St. Johnsbury facility, a restored Victorian home on Summer Street.

He cannot imagine a more rewarding occupation. "It's a vocation and stewardship," he said.

"After 38 years, I continue to love what I do, maybe even more than ever. There's a tremendous amount of joy, if I can say that, in helping people. It's just a tremendous way to help in a terribly tough time."

Sayles, who is 61 years old, plans to work until 70. He faces a substantial problem though: Sayles has no successor.

Not one of his three children want the business. And there is no young protege.

"The only way I know to find someone is to talk about it," Sayles said. "The only way I know is word of mouth. I can tell you this, it will never be sold to a corporation. It's vile to think of a company coming in here and jacking the prices up and hiding behind our community name."

Sayles Funeral Home in St. Johnsbury annually tends roughly 125 deaths. It covers southern Caledonia County and Essex County.

Guibord Funeral Home in Lyndonville annually tends roughly 235 deaths including 80-90 in Lyndon. The business covers northern Caledonia County.

The funeral homes never close.

"We're very much 24 hours a day," Sayles said. "There were two years in a row I left the family Christmas tree, on Christmas, at 9:30 in the morning."

Desrochers & Sayles offers an array of funeral services. Cremation is available at nearby Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in St. Johnsbury.

The ratio of burials to cremations is about 50-50 but cremation is slightly more popular, Sayles said. Specifically, 37 percent to 50 percent of people choose burial and 50 to 60 percent cremation, he said.

Cremated remains are not "ashes," a longstanding misnomer, Sayles said. Cremated remains are pulverized bones.

Cremation leaves behind only calcified bones, which are mechanically pulverized in a dishwasher-sized machine. Resulting fragments are provided to the deceased's family.

Cremated adult remains typically weigh 5-10 pounds. Sayles, a tall man with broad shoulders, would produce around 10 pounds but he said a petite woman is closer to 5 pounds.

St. Johnsbury is fortunate to have a crematory at

Mt. Pleasant, Sayles said. It is frequented by funeral homes as far away as Conway, N.H., he said.

Mt. Pleasant also includes a historic underground vault funded by the Fairbanks Family. It is used to store bodies during winter months when cemeteries are closed for burials.

History

Desrochers & Sayles was established in 1945 by Sayles' father, a World War II veteran named Willard "Bill" Sayles, and Louie Desrochers.

"They said, 'Let's form a partnership and try it,'" Rod Sayles said. "It's a very tough business to start."

The business though, with a French Catholic name out front, prospered, Rod Sayles said. He joined up in 1976 and actually trained under competitor Charles Guibord of Guibord Funeral Home in Lyndonville.

Rod Sayles in 1978 purchased Desrochers & Sayles from his father. Desrochers had retired several years previous.

Rod Sayles bought Guibord Funeral home in 1996.

"It really was a very logical thing," he said. "It was a close relationship. Mr. Guibord taught me the business, not my father... From the beginning I've tried to very much operate each business as a separate entity with a Lyndonville identity and a St. Johnsbury identity."

He immediately recruited well-known St. Johnsbury resident Tom Barrett, who married a Lyndon woman, for the Lyndonville business. Barrett previously worked at a feed store and as a St. Johnsbury fireman.

Now he's the funeral director and general manager at Guibord Funeral Home.

"From the standpoint of Tom being a fireman at 39 years old to where he is today, he has done phenomenally well," Rod Sayles said.

Barrett is the face of Guibord Funeral Home despite a seven-month absence last year forced by cancer treatment. Barrett though recently returned to work and is cancer free.

"He went through hell," Rod Sayles said.

In 1999, several years after purchasing the business, Rod Sayles completed substantial capital improvements at Guibord Funeral Home.

"It turned into a spacious and beautiful facility," he said.

More recently, Sayles Funeral Home underwent significant renovations. It included overhauling a carriage barn to establish business space with heat, a body cooler, and water for hearse washing.

"It's a huge, huge addition to the professionalism of the firm," Rod Sayles said.

Moving forward, he hopes to further improve the St. Johnsbury facility by expanding it to establish a chapel. He said it would ideally seat 100 people.

"I would love to leave behind to the community a non-sectarian chapel where people wouldn't have to go to the church," he said.

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70 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW ENGLAND SKI MUSEUM
The original Mittersill Inn, seen here with Mount Lafayette in the background, was opened in 1945 and was replaced by the much larger current building in the 1960s.

MITTERSILL ALPINE RESORT

Founded by an Austrian baron in 1945, Mittersill is still going strong

BY MEGHAN MCCARTHY MCPHAUL
Special to the Record

FRANCONIA, N.H. — Celebrating 70 years in operation in 2015, Mittersill Alpine Resort started as the pipe dream of an Austrian baron during World War II. After leaving his native Austria during the Nazi Anschluss, Baron Hubert von Pantz found his way to Franconia, whose rugged mountain peaks reminded him of his homeland. In 1945, von Pantz opened a 20-room inn and a rope tow for skiing at his fledgling Mittersill property.

Both Mittersill's ski slopes and the inn have undergone various transformations over the ensuing decades. While skiing at the facility wanted to the point of the trails being closed for many years, Mittersill Alpine Resort — comprising the inn and its surrounding amenities — has been going strong since the baron opened the doors 70 years ago. Mittersill now operates as a four-season vacation rental and ownership resort.

Von Pantz gradually built a ski village around his inn, adding trails and lifts, along with slope-side chalets. In the post-war era, skiing took off throughout the United States, and ski areas were developed around the country. The baron's Mittersill concept of a full-service ski village, however, was unique at the time — and has become the norm for many modern ski resorts.

Through its first decades, Mittersill was booming — both on the slopes and off. Von Pantz loved a good time and seemed to spark a party wherever he went. His title and love of the good life attracted Hollywood movie stars and European nobility to Mittersill. There seemed always to be a celebration — with regular skiing folks rubbing elbows with the rich and famous — in the inn's restaurant or at the outside bar, where ice-skating waiters provided service.

Many years after seeing his alpine village dream realized in the mountains of Franconia, von Pantz sold Mittersill to relatives and returned to Austria, where he had refurbished his original Mittersill, a medieval castle called Schloss Mittersill in the Austrian Alps.

The new owners of the New Hampshire property, the Franconia Development Company, separated

Mittersill Alpine Resort from the ski operations and the chalet development.

While the ski area gradually declined, eventually closing in 1984, the slopes — now under state ownership and part of Cannon Mountain ski area — have seen a revival in recent years. Although the resort remains completely separated from the ski endeavors out the back door, General Manager Lois Bijolle said it has been exciting to watch the ski area come alive again.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the resort was converted to a time share model, and it now operates as a non-profit homeowners association with more than 2,000 owners of vacation units and a five-member board of directors elected by the owners.

Mittersill Alpine Resort includes 53 units, all with full kitchens and access to the inn's fitness room, sauna, pools, hot tub, tennis court, game room and playground. Mittersill also has a pub, which is open to the public and offers beer and wine along with soups, salads, and sandwiches.

Through the time share model, Mittersill owners may choose to use their vacation week for a stay at Mittersill during the year, rent it to someone else, or trade the week for a timeshare elsewhere.

"Most of our owners are from the New England region and New York state, but we also see lots of guests from Canada, as well as visitors from as far away as Austria, Ireland and Mexico," said Bijolle.

While Mittersill attracts owners and guests from far afield, Bijolle said the Resort is proud of its support of local people, local businesses and the local economy as well. Beyond employing 32 people, Mittersill is the second largest real estate tax payer in Franconia, and the people who spend time at the resort also visit area attractions, shops and restaurants during their time here.

"We have over 8,000 people coming through the resort each year, and we estimate each couple spends upwards of \$400 per week in the area while they're here," said Bijolle. "That adds up to about \$1.5 million spent in the area by our visitors each year."

Bijolle said the resort is planning for renovations to the lobby and some of the units at Mittersill this spring.

With its close proximity to skiing, hiking, and all the other sightseeing and recreational opportunities that abound in the area, Mittersill offers a convenient location along with a good dose of local history. And the spectacular view of Mount Lafayette is just as breathtaking as it was when Hubert von Pantz arrived many decades ago.



PHOTO BY MEGHAN MCCARTHY MCPHAUL
The slopes of Cannon Mountain and its Mittersill Terrain Area rise behind the Mittersill Alpine Resort, which marks 70 years in business in 2015.

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70 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



David Sundman with a 1799 U.S. Dollar and Pres. James Garfield commemorative banknote.

LITTLETON COIN CO.

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON, N.H. - It was modest beginning by any standards - a business that began in a one-room apartment for \$50 a month in the Tilton Opera Block. But out of that apartment grew a boyhood dream. Today, 70 years later, Littleton Coin Co. is one of the largest employers in the North Country and one of the largest collectibles firm in the country, offering a wide array of U.S. and world coins and paper money through a myriad of mail-order services to each of the 50 states and beyond.

"We've been successful in finding talented people who have helped make this bigger than we ever imagined," said company president and coin collector David Sundman.

Littleton Coin Co., which has several hundred thousand customers across the nation, owns its inventory and sells mostly U.S. coins to U.S. customers largely through catalogs and direct mailing.

"We sell coins and banknotes to people who are collecting for fun," said Sundman. "Everything we sell, we own."

But behind every coin is a story of a time, a place, sometimes a person.

"We are selling stories," said Sundman. "Coins and banknotes are a lens into history. They are something tangible, something exciting to hold in your hand."

Sundman, who grew up around coins and stamps, enjoys those stories. They inspired him to earn a bachelor's degree in history, and after graduating from Gettysburg College in the early 1970s, he returned to Littleton to work full-time for the company.

The company - first called Littleton Stamp, then Littleton Coin and Stamp and now Littleton Coin Co. - was founded in 1945 by Sundman's parents, Maynard and Fannie Sundman.

But the passion was born nearly 20 years before, in Bristol, Conn., when a 12-year-old Maynard Sundman was introduced to his friend's stamp collection after rain had forced them inside.

A few years later, in high school, the entrepreneurial Sundman began collecting stamps at his parents' home in Bristol and after graduation was ready to launch a stamp business with \$400 in savings.

"His dream was to eventually get into the coin business," said David Sundman.

That dream would have to wait a few years as army service called Maynard away and then called him back after the United States' entry into the Second World War. During that time, while Maynard was in North Africa and Italy, Fannie saved their collective salaries to the tune of \$4,000.

Credit for the company's Littleton location goes

to Fannie, who in 1944, while lodging at the Thayers Inn, looked across the street at an impressive post office, central to the business.

"She said this is the place," said David Sundman. "My father had such confidence in my mom."

The growth of Sundman's stamp company caught the eye of Bostonian H.E. Harris, then owner of the largest stamp company, who noted the Littleton enterprise was achieving "the fastest rate of growth in the history of the stamp business."

In the succeeding decades, the company grew even more and moved several times around Littleton, from the Tilton Opera Block to offices across Main Street at the Jax Jr. movie house and then to Union Street.

"My father always said to stick with the things that are government-made," said Sundman. "You know how many were made and know they're not manipulated."

In 1999, the company moved to its present location at the Littleton Industrial Park, where it expanded from an initial 65,000 square feet to its current size of 85,000 square feet.

The four original employees in 1945 have now grown to just over 320 employees working two shifts.

Today, most of the good coins are already in collection, said Sundman, and the company works hard to find good coins, putting out the word through print and digital mediums and sending its acquisitions employees all over the country.

"We're the eyes for our customers and the filter," said Sundman. "We're picking out coins that are right for the grade. Grading is very important."

The study of currency, including coin currency, is called numismatics and every coin that arrives at Littleton Coin Co. is graded so its fits the company's high-quality standards.

Learning the trade of coin grading is not a quick process - the initial training is six months, and it takes several years to become proficient.

The company primarily buys and sells U.S. coins, but also acquires coins from across the world. Some of the oldest date back to the sixth-century B.C., said Sundman.

American currency runs the gamut and includes Colonial coins, 1799 U.S. Silver Dollars, and a commemorative banknote featuring U.S. Pres. James Garfield, who was assassinated in 1881.

Each coin must be evaluated, which can be tricky as each U.S. mint and even year has different characteristics, said Sundman.

"It's very nuanced," he said.

Littleton Coin Co. sells its inventory on approval, which means coins are sent to customers who can inspect them in their home, buy the coins they like and send back what they don't.

"Our business is built on trust all the way through," said company public relations manager Jill Kimball.

The company also offers continuity programs and clubs, which include U.S. dollar, half dollar, ancient coins, and world money clubs, that make it easier to collect a particular type of coin, said Kimball.

Many collectors begin as youngsters, but put their passion on hold, sometimes for decades, before picking it up again later, she said.

A resurgence in coin collecting that spawned a new generation of collectors occurred in the late 1990s through the federal 50 state quarters pro-



Littleton Coin Co. founders - Maynard and Fannie Sundman, during the war years.

See Coin, Page S10

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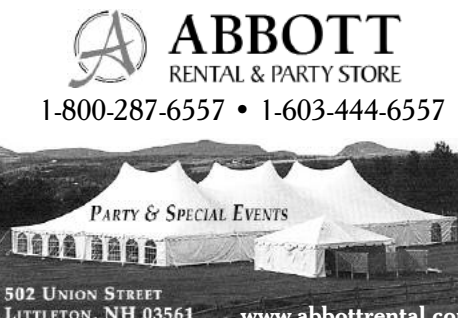
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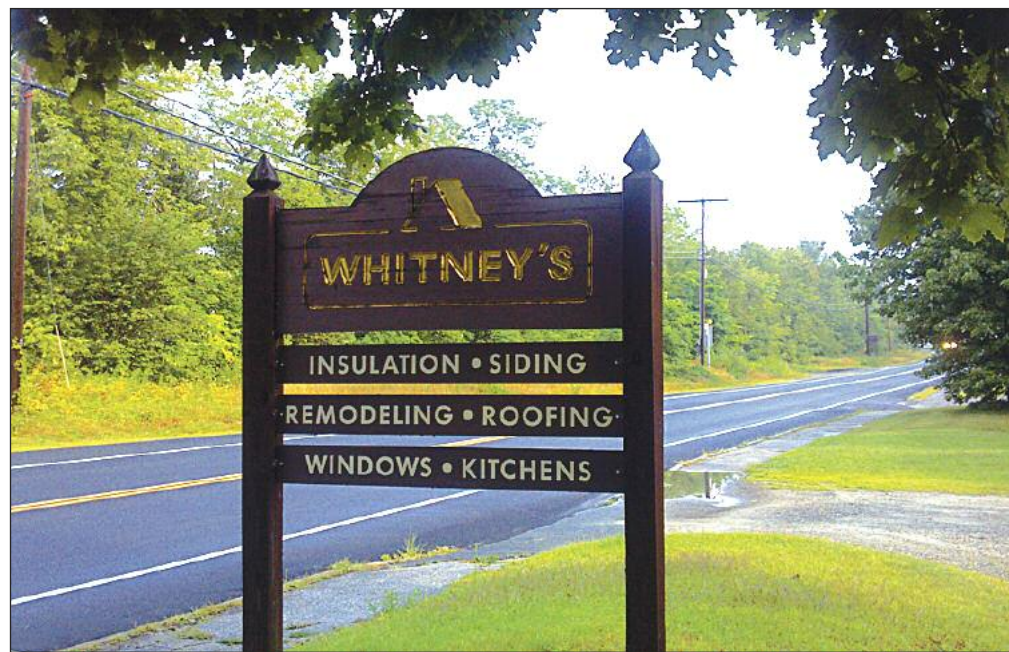
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65 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Whitney's is celebrating 65 years of offering many types of home improvement services.

WHITNEY'S INC.

BY TODD WELLINGTON
 Staff Writer

It was the year 1950. Harry Truman was president, Fats Domino was on the radio and in Franconia, N.H. a man named Robert "Bob" Whitney went into the insulation business.

Sixty-five years later, Whitney's is a home improvement landmark at 115 Main St. in Franconia providing a wide array of home remodeling services and materials to North Country home owners.

Bob Whitney is retired now but the company is still family-owned and run by his grandson Chandler "Chip" Stowell. Stowell said there's a reason why Whitney's has been able to survive over six decades of the ups and downs of the home improvement industry.

"The diversity of what we do," said Stowell. "We don't focus on one thing. We can do it all." The company does kitchen and bath remodeling, insulation, siding, windows, doors, awnings

and energy efficiency work such as energy audits and energy efficiency improvements for homeowners.

Whitney's also does porch enclosures, patio rooms, decking, blown-in insulation and multiple kinds of roofing installations to include metal, asphalt, rubber and wood.

Stowell said his grandfather moved the company to the Main Street location in the early 1970s and it has been there ever since.

It was the year 1996. It was the year Bill Clinton defeated Bob Dole to win re-election as president, moviegoers flocked to see "Jerry Maguire" and in Franconia, N.H., Chip Stowell started learning as much as he could about Whitney's from his grandfather.

"I learned a lot from him," said Stowell. "Lots of lessons. Most importantly, 'Take care of the customer.' Even if it takes a little extra. Also, 'Keep a level head.' 'Stay calm, cool and collected.' I think I only saw him get mad once."

See **Whitneys**, Page S8



The Franconia Hardware has been a fixture on Main Street in Franconia for 65 years.

FRANCONIA HARDWARE

BY ROBERT BLECHL
 Staff Writer

FRANCONIA, N.H. - What began in 1950 as a part-time repair business in the basement of a home has today grown into a downtown store that serves nearly 20,000 customers.

Franconia Hardware is celebrating 65 years.

The store is now owned by Mike Ford, the son of its founder, who described its mission: "We're problem solvers. We enjoy a good challenge."

The man taking on the early challenges was Hamilton Ford, who started the business in his Church Street basement.

Soon, it outgrew that space, and in 1957, after a former service station became available in downtown, moved into its present location at 334 Main St.

In 1959, Franconia Hardware was incorporated, and the ensuing years saw it grow in sales, size and inventory.

The part-time business soon became a full-time enterprise that encompassed bottled gas sales, ditching and excavating, septic tank installations, water

systems installation and plumbing and heating services.

In 1968, Hamilton Ford joined the American Hardware Supply Company, a hardware-buying cooperative.

Growth continued, and the 35 original square feet turned into 3,500 square feet, mostly because of customer requests.

"If it is asked for twice, we try to carry it," said Mike Ford.

In the late 1970s, the business began phasing out its service work to focus instead on hardware sales and in-store service.

In 1990, it computerized its inventory.

In 1997, SERVISTAR merged with True Value to form TruServ Corp., making Franconia Hardware a member of the largest independently owned hardware cooperative in the country.

Mike Ford said the designation gives Franconia Hardware greater buying power to compete with the big box stores and a greater product selection to boost the company's special-order business.

Mike Ford, who began working at the store in the late 1970s

after college, began running the business in 1984, after his brother, Kenneth, became ill.

In 2010, Mike Ford bought the building, which is separate from the store.

Before then, the family had owned half the store until Ford, in 2010, acquired both the building and store.

Even as a child, Mike Ford was no stranger to the business, which he was always around.

"I was taking naps on the shelves," he said.

What helped the store survive during economic downturns and lean years is its size, he said.

"We try to stay within ourselves and not get too big over time," said Ford.

The store's customer base is homeowners with some contractors and it has about 250 in-house accounts with homeowners and local contractors.

Items sold run the gamut and include electrical and plumbing, with most of what's sold, said Ford, largely for repairs rather than initial installations.

See **Hardware**, Page S9


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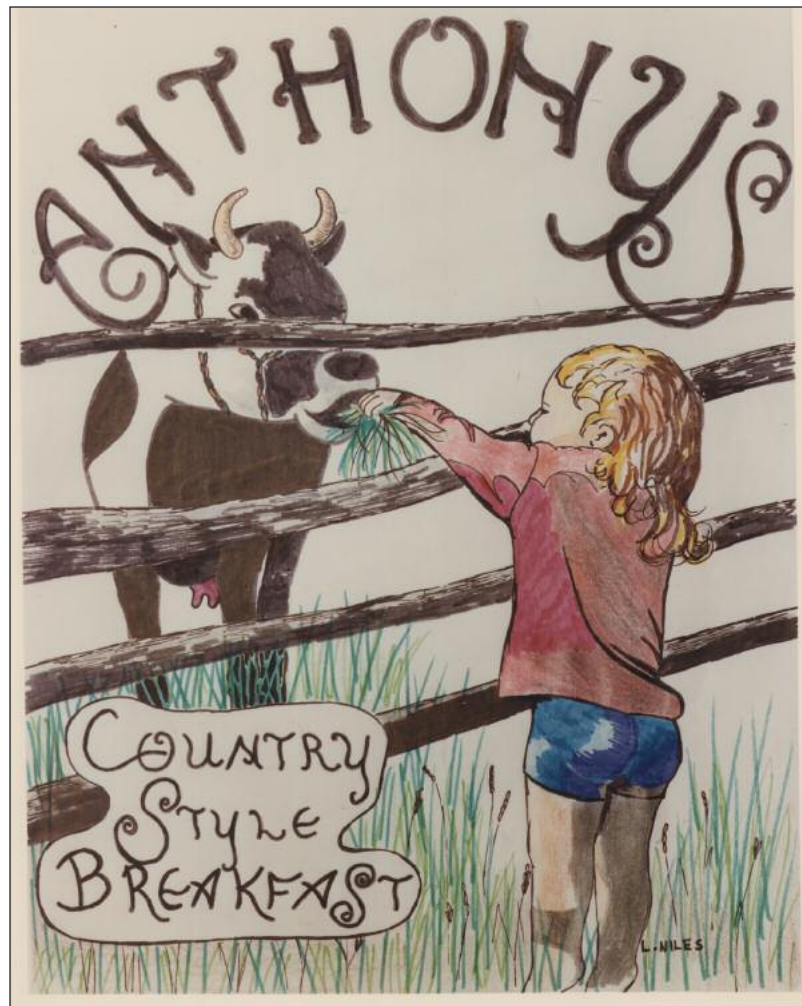
40 YEARS IN BUSINESS...

ANTHONY'S DINER

BY BRENDAN KOZLOWSKI
 Staff Writer
 ST. JOHNSBURY — On June 6, Anthony's Diner on Railroad Street in St. Johnsbury will celebrate its 40th anniversary. The restaurant opened in 1975 and has dealt with its fair share of changes and adversity, including a fire and relocation. After 40 years in business, owner Tony Proia said simply, "It's had its ups and its downs."
 "It's like a roller coaster, but if you like what you're doing it's not really a job," Proia said. "I love what I'm doing."

"I think one of the things I remember best is the Phish concert about six years ago," Proia said. "About 20,000 people came into St. Johnsbury. That lasted all day long."
 To celebrate the anniversary, Proia said he and his wife, Judy, plan to bring back some things from 1975.
 "We're going to bring back t-shirts from the 1970s. We had a Woodsman burger t-shirt that we'll bring back," Proia said. "My son said 'You should do a menu that day of what you did in 1975,' so I'm going to do something like that. It'll be a

That's just how it is."
 An example of Anthony's ability to change and adapt came during the restaurant's infancy.
 "When I first started, I was serving all frozen food. As time went on I started experimenting with french fries. Beverly Beck was working for me and told me to pick up a 50-pound bag of potatoes. I cut them up and put them in the fryolator. They turned dark," Tony Proia said. "It took six months for me to get it down, but eventually I figured it out. I had to stick with it and now people prefer them."
 Proia said he also started dealing with local businesses before it became a trend. "I was using local foods and a lot of local products. We got local beef and they slaughtered the cows down at Moore's," he said.
 One of Anthony's trademarks, the Woodsman burger, was invented in 1974, before the doors had even opened for business.
 "When I was doing the menu in '74 I had a bunch of burgers in mind," Proia said. "I wanted to pay a little tribute to my grandmother because she worked in the woods in the '30s and that's how the Woodsman burger came about."
 After Anthony's, previously located where the sheriff's department and courthouse are, was damaged in a fire, it moved to its current location in December 1979.
 "I had a lot of people saying it would be hard to keep going, but when we opened in December of '79 we had lines of people waiting to get the Woodsman burger," Proia said.



Anthony's has been serving the Northeast Kingdom for 40 years.

In his 40 years of business, Proia said one of the most memorable moments came in 2004 when Phish was hosting what was supposed to be their last festival and live performances. The festival was held in Coventry and approximately 68,000 fans attended. The festival was appropriately titled "Coventry" and many parts of Vermont saw drastically increased traffic over that weekend.

fun thing. It'll be fun for everybody and they'll get a taste for history."
 Forty years ago, Tony Proia said he didn't think he would be in business this long. "I think that most people that are in the restaurant business are gone within 10 years," he said. "It's a hard business. You've got to work hard to keep up on what's going on. You've got to try new things. If they work, they work

where the sheriff's department and courthouse are, was damaged in a fire, it moved to its current location in December 1979.
 "I had a lot of people saying it would be hard to keep going, but when we opened in December of '79 we had lines of people waiting to get the Woodsman burger," Proia said.

Whitneys

Continued from Page S7

Stowell took over several years ago and, like his grandfather before him, he has added new services and products to meet the ever-changing needs of North Country home owners. Stowell said the company has six employees working in the field and two in the office. There are three main crews including the carpentry crew, the

roofing and siding crew and the insulation crew. Most of their work is in New Hampshire, usually within a 30 mile radius, but they do sometimes venture into neighboring Vermont.
 Most of the company's work involves installation and Stowell said roofing work is a constant that seems to continue even during down economic times. He said customers benefit from Whitney's services in a number of ways including the combination of supplies and

service when undertaking a home improvement project.
 Stowell said the goal is to provide customers with a "smooth transition" when they go from the old to the new and the related disruption in their lives during a home improvement project.
 He may be the boss but Stowell said that like any small business owner he does it all, including work on the crews when other employees are out. "We're a team," said Stowell. "We're all in this together."



ABOVE: Whitney's founder, Bob Whitney
 RIGHT: Grandson and current owner, Chip Stowell



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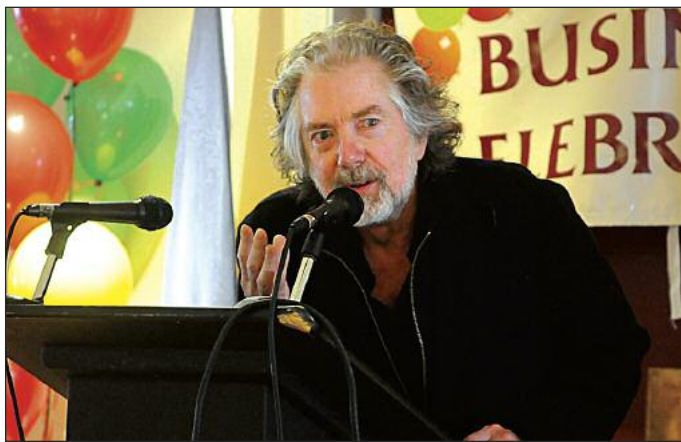
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40 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



TOP: Catamount Arts founder Jay Craven. BOTTOM: Catamount's current leadership, Artistic Director Jerry Aldredge and Executive Director Jody Fried.

CATAMOUNT ARTS

BY TAYLOR REED
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY – Catamount Arts, an organization born essentially of rural frustration, has been injecting culture into the Northeast Kingdom since 1975 when it started as a traveling roadshow for fine film. Forty years later, the Eastern Avenue-based organization is Vermont's top full service arts center specializing in film, art, art education, performance art, and community outreach, said artistic director Jerry Aldredge. The facility hosts two movie theaters, an art gallery, performance space, meeting space, and a regional box office serving 30 area organizations.

"We really are the only full-service arts center in Vermont right now, maybe even northern New England," Aldredge said. "In the last two decades Catamount has grown the appetite for art and art education in our community."

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, Catamount this year will host special events within each genre of its offering. May marks the actual anniversary month.

Catamount Arts is largely a product of frustration. Local silver-screen fans Jay Craven and Reg Ainsworth in the early 1970s were jonesing for fine film but found no such options in the Northeast Kingdom. It inspired the pair to create a traveling show that frequented places like schools and Craftsby-based Sterling College in order to project repertory and art film.

The first was "Citizen Kane."
"So they literally rented a film and took it around to several schools," Aldredge said. "They hoped to educate the public about classic films. It mostly was a mission to bring a little bit of art and culture to our Kingdom."

Catamount Arts landed its first address in 1979, subsequently inhabiting two downtown locales at different times until 1985 when it moved to the former Post Office on Eastern Avenue, which now houses

Dylan's Cafe. Catamount established its first movie theater there.

"Catamount Arts started out as a traveling film show and eventually found a place in the community to show films, and it became a center for the arts and arts education," Aldredge said. "In the last two decades Catamount has grown the appetite for art and art education in our community."

The organization in the 1980s under Craven's direction expanded beyond film. Among the efforts, it initiated a focus on performance art that landed legendary musicians including Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Charlie Daniels and Bobby McFerrin.

In 1991, Craven stepped down as executive director. Ainsworth briefly stepped up but soon left and was replaced by a few short timers before returning in 1996 to resume executive duties.

Ainsworth served until 2008 when the organization moved from its Eastern Avenue headquarters next door to the former Masonic Temple on Eastern Avenue. Jody Fried became executive director in 2009.

And Fried knows what he wants.
"We want to build arts and culture right into the fabric of the community," he said.

The goal requires a regional approach to art and extensive collaboration and cross promotion with area artists and art organizations, he said. It demands deliberative planning focused on the creative economy, he said.

"We're a nonprofit but we're able to provide a voice to an entire sector of the economy," Fried said. "The creative economy is extremely important to the long-term viability of this local economy."

Payoffs include a more vibrant community that becomes attractive to would-be residents, particularly young people considering a new home, he said.

Angali LaPierre is the face of Catamount Arts. She works the box office and projects films.

"I love it," she said. "I like all the people who walk through the door. I like being surrounded by art."

Hardware

Continued from Page S7

While the physical space has stayed the same for years, Ford has been building Franconia Hardware's special order business, helped by what is available from the True Hardware warehouses.

"We're proud of that," he said. "If we don't have it, we can get it."

The business does about 19,000 sales annually. For the future, Ford plans no major upgrades other than keeping the shelves stocked.

"We're always looking for new products to bring in and are very attuned to customer requests," he said.

Longtime store customer Chuck Herbert, of Franconia, said he likes the fact Franconia Hardware is not a big box store.

"It's a local business, which I always support," he said.



Longtime customer Chuck Herbert, left, and Franconia Hardware owner Mike Ford.

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40 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



The Ammonoosuc Community Health Services has been providing care for 40 years.

AMMONOOSUC COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

BY ROBERT BLECHL
 Staff Writer

LITTLETON, N.H. - What began as a family planning clinic in 1975, on an uncertain budget and a handful of patients, has grown into a five-site operation that today employs more than 100 people and serves more than 10,000 North Country residents.

In 2015, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services celebrates 40 years.

"In 1975, it had two staff members and a \$12,000 budget," said current ACHS Executive Director Ed Shanshala. "This year, we're just shy of a \$10 million budget. It's incredible."

Recent years have also seen a new addition to the Littleton campus, a renovated building in Littleton for a new dental care facility and the integration of behavioral health.

The stated mission of the nonprofit community health center is to provide a network of comprehensive primary care and support services to individuals and families that is patient-centered, prevention-focused and affordable and accessible to all.

Norraine Williams, who, after 33 years, retired as ACHS director in 2008, started the nonprofit community health center in a rented room on High Street.

In the beginning, ACHS was mostly state-funded, which made its budgeting process difficult when the state encountered money problems.

But it overcame the early hurdles and evolved to meet other needs in the community, as well as state goals for prenatal and family planning, and continued to evolve as more funding became available, Williams said at the time of her retirement.

In 1980, the same year it won the N.H. Charitable Foundation's Excellence in Management Award, ACHS moved into its present location at 25 Mt. Eustis Road in Littleton.

In 1995, it began to expand, and in addition to the Littleton campus that has a pharmacy, ACHS now has sites in Franconia, Whitefield, Woodsville and Warren.

Today, the federally qualified health center specializes in family planning, prenatal care, women's health, depression screening, and disease management for such conditions as heart disease and diabetes.

Its teams of physicians, nurses and assistants provide services on a sliding fee scale and serve 26 towns in Grafton and Coos counties.

Employees now total between 101 and 105, said Shanshala, and in recent years behavioral health was integrated into primary care to better meet the needs of patients.

Funding today comes from state and federal grants as well as insurance reimbursements and fees from insured and uninsured patients. The average patient is seen two to three times annually, said Shanshala.

In July 2011, after being awarded a competitive federal grant, ACHS celebrated the grand reopening of its Littleton location after the completion of a \$2.6 million capital project that added 5,700 square feet of new space and improved the existing facility's 6,000 square feet to meet a growing demand for services.

This past September in Littleton, ACHS celebrated its new dental and oral health center in a newly renovated building of 2,500 square feet that has three operatories, two hygiene rooms, a sterilization room and a dental lab.

The dental program, open two days a week, is just getting off the ground and is expected to run four days a week next year, said Shanshala.

In February 2013, ACHS earned national recognition for being a patient-centered care that focuses on highly coordinated care and long-term participative relationships.

Going into the future, Shanshala said ACHS will continue collaborating with area hospitals, schools and churches to promote wellness in the community, something he said might be termed pre-prevention.

With 320 million Americans consuming about 17 percent of the nation's GDP in health-related costs, Shanshala said ACHS is looking locally to see how residents can be mindful of their own personal health and wellness, distinct from sick care and preventative medicine.

That includes engaging in the community for healthier meals that can be made for many people in such places as church basements as well as supporting physical activity, such as Littleton's river district, which plans recreational trails for walking, running and bicycling.

"It's another way to look at how we design our communities," he said.

Shanshala summed up ACHS's role in the community.

"This is the community's health center," he said. "People have a sense that this is theirs. I think that's what makes it unique. That's what makes it work."

Coin

Continued from Page S6

gram, which circulated a series of commemorative coins by the U.S. Mint.

It ran from 1999 to 2008 and on the 50 quarters for each state is a unique design on the reverse side.

To maintain operations and meet customer demand, Littleton Coin Co. has more than a dozen departments that include marketing, creative, grading, and information technology.

Employees constantly monitor the results of direct mailings.

"It's a business where you have to take chances to acquire things and determine how you sell what you've got," said Sundman. "As for acquiring product, you don't know what's going to come through the door."

Making it work is the company's hundreds of employees.

"Our staff is very engaged and highly competent and works well together," said Sundman.

In the 70 years in Littleton, some families have been em-

ployed for generations, and the company prides itself on being able to provide opportunity for people of the North Country, he said.

Maynard Sundman, who died in 2007 at the age of 92, came to work every day until just a few weeks before he passed away.

David Sundman continues his father's vision and said slow, steady growth is the key to the company's longevity.

"If you want people to come back, you have to deliver consistent product," he said.

PHOTO BY ROBERT BLECHL
 David Sundman and Jill Kimball on the floor of Littleton Coin Co.




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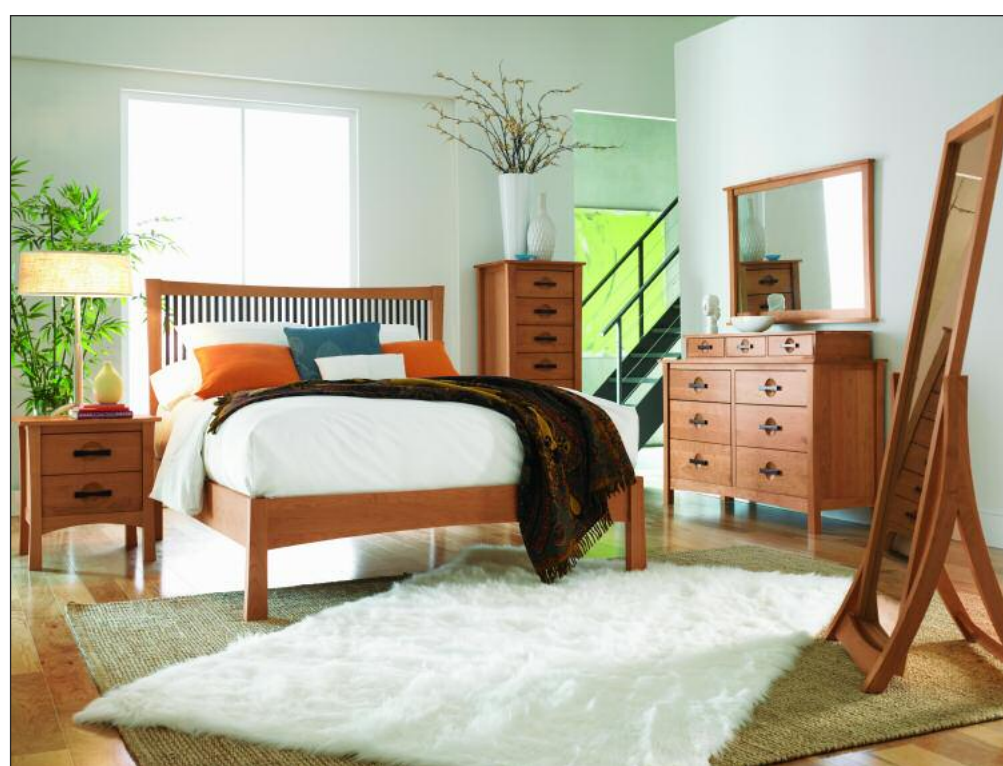
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40 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Copeland Furniture's Berkeley bedroom set.

COPELAND FURNITURE

BY LEAH CAREY
Staff Writer

Copeland Furniture owes its business success to the humble cider press.

According to founder and owner Tim Copeland, he'd been working in the lumber business in the early 1970s and connected with the president of Garden Way Research, a company in Charlotte, Vermont.

"Peter had an idea and was interested in developing a cider press," Copeland said. Together the two men designed and built the cider press and were soon selling it via mail order. "It was a great way to get started because within a few years we were making about 3,000 cider presses a year."

After the initial success of the cider press, the two men collaborated on another piece that would be appropriate for the same customers, a butcher-block work bench. "It was for someone rural or suburban who had a small piece of land and did things around their house, like garden or have a workshop," Copeland explained. "It was essentially a big butcher block table with vices on it."

Seeing the potential in the product, they re-dressed it a bit and began selling it as a butcher block table. "We started calling retailers and were initially successful with them," he said. "By 1980 we were probably entirely into tables and kitchen work centers."

Copeland approached retailers in New York and Boston, some of whom were straight kitchen stores, but some of whom also wanted what was known at the time as "lifestyle furniture."

"It was furniture aimed at Baby Boomers in the 80s," Copeland said. "It included bedroom furniture and it wasn't traditional and stained brown with lots of ornamentation. It was plain and straight-forward."

While a major fire in 1984 that burned their plant in Bradford, Vermont, could have spelled ruination, instead they used it as an opportunity to reshape their production lines. "When we rebuilt in 1985, we put in the capacity to make more complex shapes,

not just plain butcher block tables," Copeland said. "We designed a few beds and several of them were successful."

But a furniture maker cannot sell just a bed. They must also have an accompanying dresser and nightstand. And thus began their move into entire groups of bedroom furniture. "We tinkered all through the years," said Copeland. "In the last three years, we've started to do a more serious business in full contemporary and dining groups as well."

Throughout the years, Copeland has kept his eye on stewardship as a guiding principle. "Traditionally stewardship of forest land has always been of a personal interest to me," he said. "Taking care of the resources that take care of us. To me the core issue of sustainability has always been sustainable harvesting of timber. So we don't simply take a wood lot for this generation and then never be able to use it again."

The company uses sustainably harvested hardwoods from the American Northern Forest and was the recipient of the 2009 Sage Award for Environmental Excellence.

As tastes have changed, so have the woods that Copeland uses to make its furniture. "For years maple was fashionable. Natural cherry became quite fashionable and still is in New England. In recent years we've seen more interest in the darker brown, dark walnut," Copeland said. "Not so much in the north, but our customers in the cities, particularly New York, are more into walnut."

With the change in type of wood, the geography of their wood purchasing has also changed. "For years we were purchasing almost entirely maple, but that has gradually changed over the years and now we buy in the hardwood lumber market all over the northern and eastern quadrant of the states - all the way out as far as the Mississippi and down to Kentucky and Tennessee."

As for the future, Copeland said his son Benjamin is turning 40 along with the business this year. "He is our director of sales and marketing and he's very involved in the business."



Copeland Furniture's Sarah dining set.

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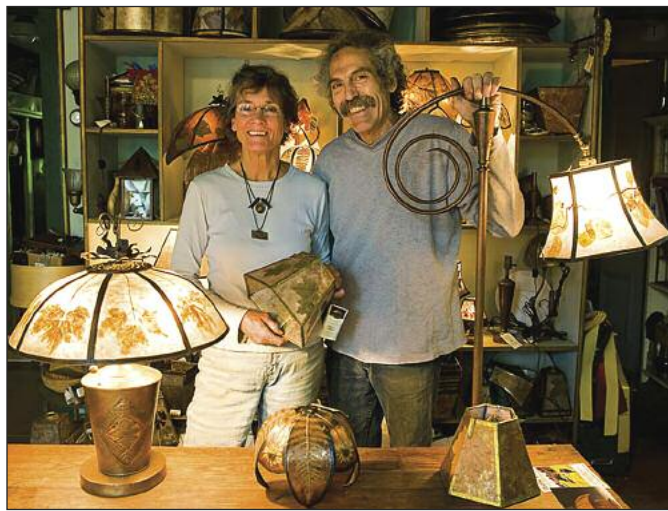


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35 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



COURTESY PHOTOS
Trenny Robb and Bob Michaud in the High Beams show room.

HIGH BEAMS

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

SUTTON – It's interesting what can happen in 35 years.

Trenny Robb and Bob Michaud launched High Beams, a lighting fixture shop in Sutton, in 1980. Between then and now, they've seen styles of lighting come and go and come again.

"We started out making lights out of junk. We've come almost full circle," Robb said.

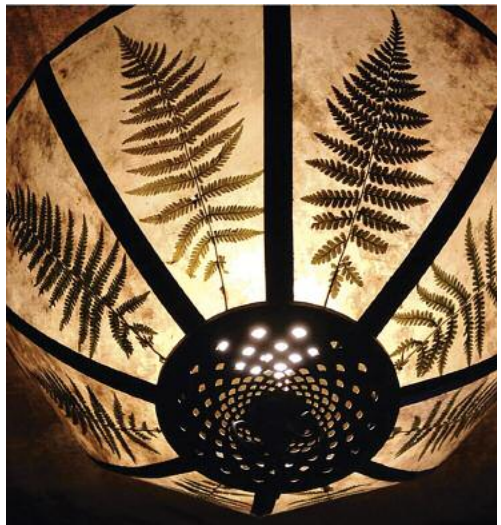
Today, young people, especially young guys, want new lighting made to match the early light fixture styles, like Edison lights. They want simple clean lines and show pieces, Robb said.

The couple moved to Sutton and started the business in 1980. It was lighting or window treatments, and lighting they picked.

"We created this business and taught ourselves everything. It grew out of survival," she said.

Among their shades are unique mica shades featuring Victorian-style botanicals, with real leaves and petals. Others are made with parchment and fabric.

As for lights, their hammered brass and metal pieces, standing lamps, chandeliers, floor lamps and wall sconces are all one of a kind. They do bathroom



COURTESY PHOTO
A lamp shade featured on the High Beams Pinterest page.

fixtures and outdoor lights. They also create specialty works of art, shown under their "fun stuff" web page.

They will do one piece, or design lighting for a whole house, camp, business or restaurant.

They have shown their work at a variety of shows in the region.

They are into the Arts and Crafts period. But lighting styles are all over the place, she said. There are no rules.

"We make lights out of anything," she said.

Many customers have ideas, photographs or drawings about what they want.

"A lot of people design them," she said.

Some want one lamp, others want the lighting in their whole house designed by Robb and Michaud. That's a lot of fun, she said.

Customers connect with High Beams through the website – the store opens by request for customers. The pieces on the website and on Pinterest were all made and sold to customers, and are posted online to offer ideas about what they can create.

Many customers discuss their needs online and by phone, and Robb and Michaud don't actually meet them until the piece is delivered.

For individual light fixtures, customers often send a picture of where they want a lamp to go, then the couple sends back a drawing of what High Beams could create.

Communicating online is a great way for the creative process to work, as customer and designer share ideas back and forth until the fixture is built.

They've had some really creative challenges.

"The most interesting job we ever did was for Foxy's," a bar in the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, Robb said.

A chandelier seven feet in diameter, it had to be designed so that anyone could put it together. And Robb said it had to be built so it could be raised and lowered quickly – important during hurricane season.

Right now, they are building a huge table lamp for another customer.

"It's enormous. It's almost as tall as me when it's all together," she said.

This lamp will have to go on a huge table in a big room.

"We'll see it when it's delivered." Robb can't wait.

EAST BURKE MARKET

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

EAST BURKE – The growth at Q Burke Mountain is already having an impact on the economy for one local store.

"Our deli has been busy," said Bill Quirk of East Burke Market.

The market and gas station on Route 114 that Quirk owns with wife Carolyn is just over a mile from the base lodge, and that makes it a prime location for

construction workers putting up the phase I lodges at Q Burke to stop for morning coffee and breakfast sandwiches, or at lunch for a drink and a hot or cold lunch.

All the deli meals are homemade and that keeps customers coming back for more, Quirk said.

The Quirks bought the market in 2010, and have kept growing for five years. The market has a

long local history, having been open and operating for 35 years in the same location, just what the Quirks like.

Bill Quirk's own experience with mini-mart-type stores goes back 34 years. Quirk owned stores in Acton, Massachusetts, and then spent 15 years in the Panhandle of Florida, including in Panama City, operating small stores there, joined by Carolyn.

See **Burke**, Page S13



PHOTOS BY ROBIN SMITH
East Burke Market prepares homemade lunches and breakfasts at the busy deli shop.


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35 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Lancaster Hardware has been serving the hardware needs of the North Country for 35 years.

LANCASTER HARDWARE

BY JENNIFER HERSEY CLEVELAND
 Staff Writer

Lancaster Hardware in Lancaster, N.H., turns 35 years old this year, while its companion store, Whitefield Hardware, turns 42. Both stores are True Value hardware stores, and the Lancaster location includes a Radio Shack.

Both stores are owned by Don and Graceanne Discenzo. Their son Darren Discenzo runs the Lancaster location, which just underwent a major expansion.

"I just can't believe I started some 40 years ago," Don Discenzo said during a recent interview about the milestones.

"It went very quickly. It's never been a bore or anything of that nature," he said.

When asked what he's enjoyed the most about running this business, Discenzo was quick to say "mixing with the general public."

"When you're working with the general public, there's always something happening different every day," he said.



Don Discenzo

The Discenzos opened the Whitefield store in 1973, and when the Frank Smith Company, a Lancaster hardware store, was going out of business, they decided to open another store there.

The old hardware store was razed and made into a parking lot, and Lancaster Hardware opened in the Chesley Block in the space now occupied by Simon The Tanner in 1980. The company remained there for about 10 years before moving to its current location on Main St.

In 1985, Lancaster Hardware added the Radio Shack dealer franchise to their offerings.

When the local lumberyard went out of business in recent years, Discenzo decided it was a good time to expand and built a 1,000-square-foot cold storage building for lumber and other materials.

"We try to provide a need for the community," Discenzo said. Open seven days a week, Lancaster Hardware gives people more options without having to travel far.

Discenzo tries to offer what's not offered locally - like the newly-added medical scrubs and other products for people in the medical field. "It's been successful," he said. They also sell Dickie's outerwear.

While the hardware business is an old one, new products are interesting to Discenzo. "Today's technology is such that there are new and innovative products," he said.

That's even tougher on the electronics side of the business, which is a bit more demanding and requires more thought process, he said.

"When you're over 70 it's tough. The more birthday numbers you have the harder change becomes - any kind of change," Discenzo said.

"We have to keep up with the times," he said.

Of his years in business, Discenzo said, "We've had fun, and it's been successful."

And to his customers, Discenzo said, "Thank you to all those who supported us over the years."



East Burke Market continues its winning formula.

Burke

Continued from Page S12

The lifestyle in the Florida marketplace is extremely hectic, with lots of traffic and constant flux of tourists.

Bill Quirk is no stranger to Vermont, however. He grew up spending vacation time at his father's home in Ludlow, Vermont.

"I was part-timing in Vermont all my life," he said.

When his father died, that phase ended, but Quirk said he still wanted the Vermont lifestyle, so much slower paced than what they lived in Florida.

So Carolyn and Bill bought a farmhouse in Danville and then the East Burke Market.

"The Northeast Kingdom reminds me of the old Vermont

that I used to see in southern Vermont," Quirk said.

While southern Vermont has changed, this area has not, he said.

"I like East Burke because it is a close-knit community. It's a great place to live," Quirk said.

And he loves the store. In the summer, he barbecues hamburgers for customers on the back porch of the store, listening to the Dishmill Babbling Brook run by in the back.

The hamburgers are a signature offering, as are homemade salads and sandwiches made to order.

The store also features other things that the locals like. For the area's many mountain bikers, the Quirks have plenty of power bars, fresh fruit and vegetables like avocados and

plenty of craft beers.

"They are huge drinkers of craft beers," Quirk said fondly of those mountain bikers, who like nothing more than a specialty beer after a day on the trails.

The store also offers a big wine selection for skiers and tourists of all seasons, plus a complete market, including thick, juicy steaks. The market has two gas pumps for the convenience of the customers, most of whom are regulars.

The improvements over the years have made a big difference in what they can offer, with lots of shelving and storage for a big variety.

But the store keeps its NEK style, with a wood stove in the corner and friends to greet you every time you return.

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35 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Kate Abrams pinches plants to help them grow bushier at Houghton's Greenhouse.

HOUGHTON'S GREENHOUSES

BY SALLY COOK
 Special to The Record
 LYNDONVILLE — The seedlings are barely visible, but the promise of new beginnings for spring and summer is in the air at Houghton's Greenhouses on Red Village Road.

The business that started with a small 8 by 16-foot addition to the Houghton's home, is celebrating its 35th year in 2015. There are now 14 greenhouses plus cold frames with more than 30,000 square feet of growing space.

"We start planting the first of the year, but none of the greenhouses are heated right now," said owner Bruce Houghton, whose family includes his wife Judith and their seven children — two boys and five girls. "We'll be heating the first greenhouse about the middle of February."

The goal is to grow all of their spring bedding vegetable, flower, hanging baskets and perennial plants and bushes right at the family's property in Lyndonville, with only a few specific plants brought in from outside of town as starter

stock, Houghton said. He said he realizes many plant sellers bring in all their plants from Canada, where he believes this type of agriculture is subsidized. That presents some stiff competition through the likes of big box stores and others, but Houghton said he would like to think that people focus on buying local.

Besides, he said, his plants are better, since they are all started and finished here where they can adjust to local temperatures through being "hardened off" in his cold frames.

"We grow a succession of plantings," he said. "Basically, our intent is to grow all plants here from seeds, where we have more control over what we grow and how we grow it. We can get them more adjusted to the outdoors for hardiness in the cold frames and greenhouses where we can open the sides up."

While their children are all grown up now, Houghton said some of his daughters help out during the season, when employees may number 20. His sons also pitch in when they are needed.

Houghton was working in a local machine shop when he built his

home on Red Village Road and decided to add the small greenhouse addition. One of his co-workers told him his friend's father was going to get out of the vegetable stand business, so Houghton thought that might open a door of opportunity for him to enter the business.

That proved not to be, Bruce said, as the co-worker's friend's father continued to garden and have a vegetable stand. Meanwhile, Houghton was laid off.

"So I had no market," he said. "But I took out a small ad in the newspaper and started a vegetable stand. Then I added flowers."

Then he was laid off again, but took the risk to make horticulture a full time job and quit the machine shop. The rest, as they say, is 35 years of history.

There are bright spots leading the way to the future. For instance, the town of Littleton, N.H., has been buying their municipal hanging baskets — 50 of them — for Main Street from Houghton's Greenhouses for the past three years. Combination baskets are an important part of the business, he said.

THE COFFEE POT

BY MEGHAN MCCARTHY
MCPHAUL
 Special to The Record

LITTLETON, N.H.—People have been coming to the Coffee Pot restaurant for coffee, home cooking and congenial conversation for 35 years. The 29-seat restaurant, owned by Jim and Jean McKenna, is tucked into a nook along Main Street near the corner of Pleasant Street in downtown Littleton. Claiming a spot at the counter feels a little bit like gathering around the kitchen table at home.

Jean is generally behind the counter, always smiling, greeting customers — many of them by name — and welcoming them to a stool or a seat at one of the smattering of tables in the restaurant. Jim, who is

mostly retired from the business now, but makes deliveries to the kitchen when necessary and serves as the "Pot's fix-it guy, is often found sitting at the counter engaged in pleasant banter with diners.

"We have a number of customers who have been with us the whole 35 years," said Jean, who cheerfully juggles answering the phone, serving platters of eggs and bacon, and chatting with customers. "Some people come every single day."

That hometown charm is perhaps what draws politicians to the Coffee Pot when they swing through the region. Plenty of gubernatorial, senatorial, and presidential candidates have paused at the Coffee Pot's U-shaped counter through the decades, along with their entourages of cameramen and re-

porters. If they're looking to portray a down-to-earth image, the Coffee Pot is clearly the right fit.

Jim, who had been working as an auto mechanic in Massachusetts, purchased the existing Coffee Pot in 1980. Back then it was a small coffee and donut shop with 12 seats. Jean grew up in Littleton in a large family and had just moved back to town in 1980. The two met in the spring, got married in the fall, and they've run the restaurant together ever since.

Right from the start, the McKennas decided that while they'd be open for breakfast and lunch, the breakfast menu would be available all day, every day. And they've always offered a "bottomless" cup of coffee.

At first they weren't open Sundays, but now they open at the regular 6:30 a.m. time and close at noon. (The Coffee Pot is open Monday-Friday until 4 p.m. and until 2 p.m. Saturdays.) They were also among the first restaurants, in 1992, to become a non-smoking establishment.

While there are challenges to running a small business, like being constantly on call to cover shifts or deal with equipment issues, Jean is happy at her work. She comes in before the sun is up most days to get the restaurant set up, works until mid-day, heads home to Monroe for a short break, and is back to cash out at day's end.

"I'm part of the crew," she said, working side-by-side with six full-time and two part-time employees. "They all work very well together and with me."

The best part of the job? The customers, of course.

"Our customers are so good, and they really feel like family," said Jean.



Jim and Jean McKenna stand behind the Coffee Pot counter.

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30 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Quest Transportation founder and owner Jeff Moore.

QUEST TRANSPORTATION

BY BRENDAN KOZLOWSKI
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — 30 years in business is a long time for any company. In September, Quest Transportation, located on Main Street in St. Johnsbury, will celebrate its 30th anniversary.

"We opened in September of 1985. It was the Monday after Labor Day. September 9, I believe," Quest Transportation founder and president Jeff Moore said. Indeed, Quest Transportation opened its doors Sept. 9, 1985.

Quest Transportation is a freight brokerage firm that calculates supply chain logistics.

Throughout his 30 years in business, Moore said he has retained a number of customers. "We have several customers who we've had over the past 30 years, since we opened," Moore said.

Moore said while Quest Transportation has provided several unique challenges, all-in-all it has been an exciting, successful venture. "It's been a roller coaster ride," Moore said. "It's been a good 30 years. It's been really good. Very much like a roller coaster ride."

Quest Transportation started in a small one room office and today the company's state-of-the-art offices are located just up the road from the original site.

Quest Transportation currently services 48 states

(not Hawaii or Alaska), Canada and Mexico.

"We've pretty much always been that big. We don't own the trucks. We're a logistics company," Moore said. "We organize all the transportation for trucks, but we don't actually own them. We work with shippers and manufacturers and contract freights for them."

In its mission statement (on www.questtrans.com), Quest Transportation states its goal is "to maintain our dedication and commitment to our valued customers and carriers. Quest will continue to refine our quality customer service and expand our capabilities. It's our goal to continuously heighten the standard of excellence we are setting in the transportation industry."

Moore reiterated his company's statement. He said what has made his company successful has been the relationships it forms with everyone involved, from customer to consumer.

"What works is providing good customer service, quality customer service and treating our employees right," Moore said of Quest Transportation's success over the years. "Many of our employees have been with us for a long time."

Moore said after 30 years in business, he hopes Quest Transportation will continue for an additional 30 years.

"I certainly hope so. I hope I'm not running it, but I certainly hope it's around," Moore said.

25 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



A recent garage built by Ken's Carpentry. Kenneth Grant has built more than 600 garages in the last 25 years.

KEN'S KARPENTRY

BY JAMES JARDINE
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Kenneth Grant has built a successful specialty carpentry business, focusing on building garages for customers, over the past 25 years. In a prefabricated process, Grant builds walls and panels in his workshop near his home on Brown Farm Road in Lyndon. He then transports the prefabricated components to the site and completes the garage on-site.

A measure of his long time in business and his success, Grant has built over 300 garages and more than 65 houses over the years.

Ken started out his career working for Lyndonville Savings Bank and Rust Co. He married his wife Sandy and the couple moved to Maine, where he sold mobile homes and garages. When he returned to Vermont, he produced modular homes in Vermont for a while in the 1980s.


Starting out on his own, he began marketing his carpentry business in the Caledonian-Record. He came up with "specials" with a special price and ran inserts in the Caledonian-Record. According to Grant, one special might be a bathroom makeover or new flooring. One special he ran was a complete

garage for a special package price. He was pleasantly surprised by the strong response he got from the specials in his circular.

His customers particularly responded to his custom garage prices. Since then, his business has grown and he's erected new garages as far west as South Hero, south as Brattleboro and north as the Canadian border. He says he gets a lot of referrals from satisfied customers. While he makes as much as he can, he added that if he needs trusses for a project, he'll buy the trusses. He has an online website, but had to rebuild it after it was hacked

See **Karpentry**, Page S17

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25 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Marty Beattie at his Danville store.

MARTY'S 1ST STOP

BY TAYLOR REED
Staff Writer

DANVILLE – Score one for the American dream.

Marty's 1st Stop on Route 2 just turned 25 years old. Marty Beattie, an ever-humble Danville native, founded and owns the operation.

"It's hard to believe it has been that long," he said this week. "I just saw a need for a store in Danville. I always felt that Danville needed an anchor store. I felt very strongly that there should be an easy place to get a sandwich, milk, etc., and also a place where folks from the community could visit with each other in the process."

Beattie, who formerly scraped together a Northeast Kingdom living from simultaneous work at E.T. & H.K. Ide in St. Johnsbury and via modest commercial real estate development, put money where his mouth was. In 1989 he purchased the former Danville Garage, renovated it with family help and opened Marty's 1st Stop the following year.

The business took off running,

quickly eclipsing its mom-and-pop roots. Expansion followed.

Beattie, for example, installed fuel pumps in 1991 and in 2008 undertook massive renovations to establish the store's current format. A Union Bank branch was installed in 2008 as well.

The growth was startling, Beattie said. It was too fast, he said.

"There was a lot of hard work," said Beattie, who raised five children with his wife Catherine. "I was devoted to the store day and night.

I missed my kids' games and wasn't home."

Beattie now employs more than 40 people. Some have worked there for 10, 15 and 20 years.

Crystal Coutu, a 12-year employee, said, "We're like family around here."

Mike Paine, a 15-year employee, said, "For the most part it has been a great place to work."

Employee Merle Haskins said,

See Marty's, Page S17



Beattie with "the gang" at Marty's 1st Stop in Danville.



Palmieri Roofing at work in Lyndonville. The company has been topping off area structures for the past 25 years.

PALMIERI ROOFING

BY JAMES JARDINE
Staff Writer

Palmieri Roofing is a family affair. The company, with headquarters on the old Route 2 above Banzai Bridge, is run by Mark and Carol Palmieri and their sons Tony and Dana and their daughter Lindsey.

According to the founder, Mark Palmieri, the key to the company's success is its reputation for reliability, honesty and integrity. Covering Northern New Hampshire and all of Vermont makes the company highly visible and helped them land a recent big job working on the roof of a building owned by Gosselin Well Drilling in Derby. According to Palmieri, Dan Gosselin contacted him and said, "We see you everywhere all over the state and we have heard nothing but good about you."

Palmieri got his start after a statewide roofing company closed its St. Johnsbury operation. He said he went out on his own in the St. Johnsbury area and has been roofing ever since. He competes against another major roofer, Rodd the Roofer, but it's friendly and the two companies have a lot of respect for each other. Palmieri added, "We have our own niches. We have our own clients."

Palmieri Roofing does a wide variety of roofing projects including residential, standing seam metal, new construction municipal and corporate roofing and maintenance on existing roofing. He said, "We never shut down" because they have to be available to go across the state on short notice to do emergency repair. Most recently, the Sheraton Inn in Burlington called at 11 p.m. to report a leak. Palmieri's Roofing was on the

roof by 1 a.m. and had the roof repaired by 4 a.m. The company has major industrial customers like Green Mountain Coffee, EHV and Cabot Creamery for whom they do maintenance and repair work.

Palmieri said the roofing profession is the "coldest in the winter and the hottest in the summer but has the best view of any business."

Recently Palmieri has established a Colchester office and the family is optimistic the branch office will bring them extra business and make it easier to respond to a customer quickly.

Palmieri feels a high level of trust and a reputation for quality work have been the key to the company's success. He cites "a tremendous amount of repeat business" and notes that one prominent industry standard is the Firestone Quality Incident Report, which is a national standard that evaluates the quality and reliability of roofing contractors. It rates companies on a scale of one to ten, based on customer surveys evaluating contractors. A ten rating is the worst and a one is the best. Mark proudly reports Palmieri has a less than one rating, one of the highest in the country and it is virtually unprecedented in the industry. Mark repeats the secret of his success, saying "our good work sells itself and our reputation gets us more work all the time."

Palmieri says, "I have no decision to roof the whole world," but has seen his company grow from \$100,000 a year in sales to \$3.5 million a year.

Still, Palmieri sets aside time for his first love: coaching youth sports. He's coached for 40 years and just signed on for another season as head football coach at Lyndon Institute. He thoroughly enjoys giving back to the community and working with youngsters.

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30 YEARS IN BUSINESS...

AQUAREALM AQUARIUM AND PETS

BY LEAH CAREY
 Staff Writer

When the 2012 Christmas fire ravaged Railroad Street in St. Johnsbury, DJ and Melissa Nelson had a lot more to worry about saving from their storefront than just merchandise. They also had to rescue and find temporary homes for dozens of animals. According to DJ Nelson, the air quality was so poor that they had to house the animals of AquaRealm Aquarium And Pets for a few weeks with some of the dozens of people who showed up to help.

But the pet business isn't always so harrowing. DJ Nelson has loved small animals since he was young. "We had cats and we did the whole goldfish in a bowl and hamster and guinea pigs. Nothing extremely exotic," he said. "I didn't really get into dealing with birds or reptiles until after high school."

In fact, when he first encountered a friend's iguana he thought, "Well, this creeps me out." But after spending some time with it, he grew more comfortable and got his own small reptile, a green anole. "You can't really handle them a lot, but they're fun to watch. And I thought, this is cool."

He did the same thing with birds - he wasn't sure he liked them until spending time with a friend's bird and realizing that he actually liked it a lot.

Now he enjoys both reptiles and birds, although he admits, "With snakes my heart still beats a million miles an hour, but most of the other reptiles and birds I'm fine with."

Nelson started out 20 years ago as HodgePodge Pets in his parents' basement in Barnet. At the same time he was working a full-time job at Lebanon Pet & Aquarium Center in West Lebanon, N.H.

He met fellow animal lover Melissa, and they eventually got married and moved the store from

his parents' basement to a very visible storefront on Railroad Street. "I had to get past the scary thought of being completely self-employed," Nelson said. "But the customer base had gotten to a point where I couldn't do all of what I wanted, or they needed, in the spot that I was in."

So he gathered his courage and they made the jump to downtown St. Johnsbury. Now in a large space that's filled with the sounds of many animals, they're able to carry freshwater and saltwater fish, birds, reptiles, small animals (guinea pigs, hamsters, rats, etc.) and associated products, as well as quality dog and cat food and toys. "We hear frequently, 'I love the condition of the animals here, they're well taken care of, everything is kept up really nice,'" Nelson said.

Nelson acknowledges that people can often save money by purchasing online, but he is offering service and in-person education that can't be found through any online marketplace. He remembers one man in particular who decided to pay the extra few dollars to shop locally. "He said, 'I'd much rather spend it and have you guys set it up,' and go through the whole thing with him step by step. That's something you can't get online."

And they offer one other service that can only come from having daily hand-on contact with the animals: they make certain that the animals that they provide have a good temperament. "If there's somebody who is starting to be aggressive, they actually stay in the store and we don't sell them," Nelson said. "We had a hamster that passed on after about four years. We don't put them down. That's something we don't agree with, so we keep them."

AquaRealm will do special orders of pets they don't carry in store, with the exception of cats and dogs. "There's a lot out there in shelters that need homes," Nelson said.



DJ Nelson holds Regis, a conure who makes his home at AquaRealm.

Karpentry

Continued from Page S15

by someone in Indonesia.

Grant says he gets inquiries from people all over New England who are moving up here from out of state and want to have a garage built for a new home they are buying.

The couple have three children, aged 34, 32 and 14, but none of them work with their father. He and Sandy run the business together and, depending on the season and how busy he is, Grant will hire a crew of four

carpenters to help him. Over the years, some helpers move on, and Grant says, "They've learned some very good skills." He believes no matter what field a crew member goes into later on, "everything helps."

Grant said he's built three garages for a single customer, because the customer sold the house where he built one garage, then moved to a new house and had a garage built then moved again. Talking about his business philosophy, he says, "I bend over backward to make sure they are happy."

Grant said he is going to

come up with a business promotion to celebrate his 25th anniversary, but he hasn't settled on the details yet. Grant is emphatic about one thing, "I really like doing it." He says he enjoys going to different towns and meeting new people and building a garage in a new surrounding. He's enjoyed the work he does over the last 25 years and adds, "I've been busy every year." He says during slow times he may reduce the size of his crew, but he will still build a lot of garages in a year.

When he's not working, he and his wife kayak and hike.

Marty's

Continued from Page S16

"It's an interesting place here. I'm shocked at how many things are in this little store. You don't find vanilla beans everywhere."

Office manager Dawn Sullivan, a 20-year employee, said, "I think we're different from a lot of places because we have such variety. We have everything from bagged shavings to steaks."

Beattie also employs many young people "who benefit from the discipline of regular work and the camaraderie of our Marty's family," he said.

The store sells gas, groceries,

baked goods, homemade soup, specialty items, and Boar's Head meat.

"Our deli is very popular and our extensive meat department is consistently a huge draw," Beattie said.

The store also includes a well appointed pet food and birdseed department. Livestock feed was formerly available but phased out. "There are more people feeding birds now than horses," Beattie said.

Merchandise is a reflection of customer wants, he said. That means myriad local products like cheese and produce.

"We like local, our customers like local," Beattie said.

The store maintains hundreds of loyal customers, he said. Sales peak

in the summertime thanks to vacationers at nearby Sugar Ridge RV Village & Campground and at Joe's Pond in West Danville.

"With my wife, Catherine, we have five of our own children but through the store I actually feel that we have several hundred," Beattie said.

And the store continues to be a community focal point, he said. Politics is a common topic of discussion.

"It can get pretty exciting at times but we wouldn't have it any other way," Beattie said.

Despite his 25 years at the helm of Marty's 1st Stop, Beattie has no plan to retire.

"Maybe shorter days," he said.


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20 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



Nicquelle Fortin and her father, Ray Desilets, work together for Desilets' company Advantage Tennis.

ADVANTAGE TENNIS

BY JENNIFER HERSEY CLEVELAND
Staff Writer

PASSUMPSIC – While Ray Desilets and his daughter Nicquelle Fortin are in the tennis court business, they have chosen to focus on helping young people learn a good work ethic and be responsible and productive members of society.

In the company's twentieth year, they grant their success to God.

"We started focusing on molding young adults," Fortin said. "That's where we've had our best success."

Fortin said she and her father try to hire young people who are still in high school, with the intent to keep them on the workforce every summer through their college years.

The employees, in turn, get a nice fat paycheck from the very long work weeks in summer, and can afford to buy books and other needed items for their return to college in the fall.

Fortin is one of those who started in the company very early, painting lines on tennis courts as a child, and moving on to full employment 15 years ago.

The upside of maintaining tennis courts, skate parks and walkways all summer is getting winters off. "I enjoy the tan," Fortin added. "It keeps me in good shape. I also like the fact that every day is different. It's never boring or monotonous."

Fortin said every job is different, and she enjoys

See Tennis, Page S20



15 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



The Notch View Inn and Campground has been going strong for 15 years.

NOTCH VIEW INN AND CAMPGROUND

BY JENNIFER HERSEY CLEVELAND
Staff Writer

COLEBROOK, N.H. — For 15 years, the Notch View Inn and Campground has been dishing up delightful breakfasts, stunning visitors with amazing 180-degree vistas of the Presidential Range, and opening up trail systems for ATVs and snowmobiles to its guests right out the front door.

"It's a fun business," said Bill Sparklin, who owns the inn and campground with his bride, Dona Sparklin. "You meet a lot of people."

Recreational vehicle enthusiasts can hook up to utilities and those who prefer more primitive camping experiences can bring their tents. For those who come and don't want to leave, the Notch View also offers longterm RV sites.

The Sparklins were living in Florida and missed the mountains as well as the seasons of more northerly reaches of the United States. Dona Sparklin is from New Hampshire, while Bill Sparklin grew up dirt-biking in the mountains of Maryland. Both had enjoyed more than 20 years of snowmobiling and camping in the Colebrook area, and they decided they'd like to buy a bed and breakfast there.

"After living in some big cities, I wanted to live in the wilderness," Bill Sparklin said. "It's just a great area."

While snowmobiling with a friend about four years ago, Bill Sparklin came upon the Notch View, which was for sale. "We bought it a month and a half later," he said.

The innkeepers clearly love what they do. In on-line reviews, the Sparklins are described by past guests as being friendly, amazing, extremely helpful, and outstanding providers of service. One reviewer wrote that they bent over backwards to help him.

The historic inn was built in the late 1800s and moved by oxen down the mountain in 1929. It is now attached to Colebrook's original one-room schoolhouse, which was built in the early 1800s.

The 34-acre site was once the homestead portion of Royal Farms, New Hampshire's largest dairy operation at one time. The Notch View Inn and Campground welcomed its first guests in 1990.

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The Notch View is right on Corridor 18 of the snowmobile trail system, and has on-site access to the 1,000-plus-mile Ride the Wilds ATV trail system. Rental machines are available about a mile away.

Bill Sparklin help develop the Ride the Wilds system, and he noted that without the support of the New Hampshire government, including Governor Maggie Hassan, it probably would never have come to fruition.

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15 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON
Lyndonville Bagel Depot Owners Wanda and Chip Aussiker

LYNDONVILLE BAGEL DEPOT

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

The Lyndonville Bagel Depot has had two owners and 15 years of successful business at 66 Broad St. in Lyndonville.

The popular eatery, located across the street from the landmark Miss Lyndonville Diner, was opened by Lionel and Donna Laferriere in 1999. The sold the operation to long-time employee Wanda Aussiker and her husband Chip Aussiker in 2011.

Wanda Aussiker had worked for the Laferrieres for ten years while Chip Aussiker was a parts manager at the Sanel Auto Parts store in St. Johnsbury.

As the story goes, the deal was struck after Lionel Laferriere approached the Aussikers about buying it. "They had built a really strong business and they really wanted to make sure they sold it to someone who would keep everything the same way," said Chip Aussiker. "We've done that. We've built on what they started."

But the Aussikers have made a major improvement and investment in the shop's future of their own.

They stopped buying their bagels from an outside source and installed their own bagel making kitchen. The project cost an estimated \$100,000 but Chip Aussiker says it was well worth the time and the expense.

"We did it so we could have creative control, inventory control and quality control," he said. Aussiker admits the change to a producing bagels on-site was a bit "nerve wracking" at times, but it was well received by the shop's loyal customer base who continued to buy their bagels and bagel sandwiches

throughout the transition.

"If anything, it's increased business," he said of the new bagel strategy.

Like the Laferrieres before them, Chip and Wanda Aussiker run the Bagel Depot as a family operation with daughter Heidi Norton, who prepares the bagel dough. They also have six other employees who wait on customers and prepare the breakfasts and lunches they are known for.

The Lyndonville Bagel Depot serves more than bagels and spreads. Their menu also features an array of specialty sandwiches as well as homemade breads, muffins, and salads. They also serve 12 kinds of Green Mountain coffee.

Both owners kept the shop open despite being hit by floods from an overflowing Passumpsic River. The first time was in 2002.

The Aussikers had just bought the store when a second flood hit the Broad Street area due to Hurricane Irene. The water damage was significant enough to close the shop for ten days but the Aussikers were determined to re-open.

"Closing wasn't really an option," said Chip Aussiker. "You just had to push through. I remember that first day walking in and saying, 'Okay, where do we start?'"

Fortunately they had a lot of help and encouragement from their customers who quickly resumed their bagel-buying habits as soon as the shop was cleaned up and reopened.

"It was like nothing had happened," he said. "It was just a super thing."

10 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



BOXCAR AND CABOOSE

BY SALLY COOK
Special to The Record

ST. JOHNSBURY – Boxcar and Caboose is one of the steaming engines driving commerce on Railroad Street, as a leader in the book selling industry with creature comfort sides like the corner Hobo Candy Store.

Steaming? Ah, that's from the hot coffee, latte and tea bar, the hot-off-the-press Espresso Book Machine, or a newest hot Vermont authors and books. Add to that the just-arrived newest in color publishing machines.

Opened by community stalwarts Scott and Joelle Beck in 2005, the store has steadily gained popularity with customers who love real books like they do. You know, the kind with real covers, real paper you can feel, take anywhere and keep reading without a battery going dead.

"We opened as a book store and coffee shop 10 years ago, and we're still family owned and in the same location," said owner Scott Beck, who credits his wife with the responsibility of running the store. "She is really the face of the store. She deserves all the credit."

Scott has been juggling the publishing side of the business with his responsibilities teaching at St. Johnsbury Academy. Now he's juggling more, as a newly-elected St. Johnsbury representative in the House.

"The biggest change over the years was to diversify into toys and the candy, but book sales are still

60 percent of the business," he said, figuring that the book publishing end of the business under Railroad Express to be the second highest percentage.

While many local book stores closed with the advent of digital readers, big box bookstores and online sales, that trend has reversed.

"Now the number of book stores has increased in the USA," Beck said. "Three years ago, digital books plateaued at 15 to 18 percent, and that hasn't changed," he said. "We feel we were right, that basically people preferred paper."

He feels that the digital book-reading crowd hasn't cost his business very much, because they weren't the kinds of people who shopped at bookstores.

"There is no substitute for browsing books," he said. "And most of the Vermont books are not distributed online. For instance Jim Douglas' book is not available on line. It's really good."

Railroad Street Press, the publishing division of Boxcar and Caboose offers a full range of services to help authors get published and literally make their work available to the world. Services include a range from editing and book binding to cover design.

The digital age and the Espresso Book Machine provide for publishing without all the middle men and clunky distribution networks. So books written by authors, published and printed by the book store are made available instantly to readers.

The new publishing machine that arrived mid-January has the ability to print in color in response to what their customers wanted, Beck said.

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5 YEARS IN BUSINESS...



COURTESY PHOTOS
Donna Reed and Vladimir Akhlatkin, co-owners and coaches of Kingdom Gymnastics, with Reed's daughter Amy Bedor, coach and business manager.

KINGDOM GYMNASTICS

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY – Kingdom Gymnastics has grown in its five years, expanding to include school programs and coaching youngsters on competitive national teams.

Coaches Donna Reed and Vladimir Akhlatkin own the business located at the Green Mountain Mall, where youngsters gather at all times of day. Thousands of young people have used the facility over the years.

The facility is in its second year of a competitive girls program for the Junior Olympics, Reed said. There are 16 girls who compete on four different levels.

There are six boys in the competitive training program, including Akhlatkin's grandson, Nikita Bolotsky.

The 14-year-old moved with his family from Las Vegas to the St. Johnsbury area to train with his grandfather.

He's on the junior national team and is a two-time junior national champion. He has Olympic hopes.

There are several other youngsters who are working toward competition on national and international levels. "We hope to help them achieve their dreams," Reed said.

Kingdom Gymnastics began with and continues its main focus on its recreational and instructional programs. But Reed said the biggest growth now is in of-

fering winter and spring sports programs for area schools.

They serve public and private schools, from Good Shepherd and Riverside to Lyndon Town School, Concord School and Danville School.

The schools bring their students in to the facility to take advantage of the indoor opportunities, she said. St. Johnsbury Academy's women's gymnastics team uses Kingdom Gymnastics for their program as well, Reed said.

Burke Mountain Academy uses the facility in the fall, as part of the early training on core and upper body strength for skiing. They focus on tumbling, trampoline and ropes, among other activities in the facility.

Home-schooled students also come in, taking advantage of quiet times during the school day to use the facility. Some train at the same time as the competitive boys.

"These are the ways we've grown," Reed said. She estimated that there are between 225 and 250 youngsters of all ages currently involved in some kind of program at Kingdom Gymnastics.

The facility continues to offer the popular Friday night open gym from 6:30 to 8 p.m. when youngsters can come in to have fun. They also do birthday parties and other events.

Gymnastics appeals to a wide range of youngsters, from the recreational enthusiasts to the hockey player who comes in to keep up their skills as part of training for hockey.



Mike Middleton lifts as Brad Collins spots him at Xtra Innings Performance. Adrian Guyer is entering his fifth year of running the business since it opened in 2010.

XTRA INNINGS PERFORMANCE

BY BRENDAN KOZLOWSKI
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Five years ago Adrian Guyer opened Xtra Innings Performance (XIP) Training Facilities. Guyer works to personally train athletes, recondition athletes after injury and runs a boot camp.

"When I started there was nothing else here. We were the first and a lot of people were pretty skeptical as to whether or not this region, this area would buy into personal training, performance development, that kind of facility," Guyer said.

"At that point we had an uneducated market and I had to provide a service that was number one top notch, and then educate people on the value of finding fitness a lifelong investment," Guyer said. "I had to bridge that gap. What XIP is is not just a gym, we are really a performance facility where people come with specific goals — weight loss or a sport-specific athlete. We had to really teach people that we're professionals and we offer something specific to the clientele."

In XIPs early stages, Guyer was the only trainer. However, soon he needed help and now hires two

trainers and strength coaches to work with him, occasionally four.

"We have people who have been with us all five years. A couple that were here on day one," Guyer said.

Guyer had been working in Hanover, New Hampshire, and also training individuals at Northern Physical Therapy before he started XIP. "I worked after hours there with patients that needed that next level of training," Guyer said.

Guyer attended Plymouth State to play football, but the rehab from a bad car accident led him to the field he's in today. Plymouth State didn't have an exercise science class, though, so he transferred to Lyndon State College and created a self-designed program that is today the exercise science major.

"Anthony Skirza was my advisor and the head of the department. He basically was the man. He was the one who did it," Guyer said. "I'll never forget it. He said, 'Mr. Guyer, there's no reason why you can't do that.'"

Guyer now has two XIP locations: the original one on Broad Street and a new one he opened a year and a half ago on Main Street.

Tennis

Continued from Page S18

the challenge of having a new problem to solve each time.

While they take the winters off, so to speak, Fortin said that down time is used for marketing, repainting all equipment — even the trucks each year, and maintaining the 30 to 40 small engines on other equipment.

As soon as temperatures remain above 50 degrees at night, the season begins in earnest.

"We can't stop in summer," Fortin said.

The crews head out at 6 a.m. and never know when their day will end. "I can't plan anything,"

Fortin said, adding that the inability to make firm plans can be sort of freeing.

The company has grown over the years to a fleet of five trucks, some of which are pumper/tankers to carry and spray color coating.

At one point, Fortin said, they expanded into fencing and other work and it got a little out of hand. She and Desilets decided they had better just stick to what they do best. "That's where we have our best success, when we stick to our bread and butter," Fortin said.

Advantage Tennis, which employs five people currently besides Fortin and Desilets, works all over New England and New York, so the average day may include a drive to the Cape, Bar Harbor or

upstate New York, Fortin said.

When asked about the company's beginnings, Fortin said she doesn't really remember because she was only 10 at the time. "I just remember getting to go out with my dad in Larry," she said, referring to the company's first truck, which is still in use after 20 years and more than a quarter of a million miles.

All of the trucks are named after the Three Stooges, Fortin said, but Larry is special. "Best truck ever," Fortin said. "Everyone fights over it."

When asked what Advantage Tennis would do to celebrate their 20th year milestone, Fortin laughed and said, "Put our heads down and get to work."

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