

BYGONE TIMES

A Newsletter of the TROUTDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Special Edition

Opening of new General Store recalls the old

Proprietors Terry and Jodi Smoke and their daughter Cassie, celebrated the opening of a new Troutdale General Store, June 29, at 289 E. Historic Columbia River Highway in old downtown Troutdale. The event that offers a good excuse to recall Troutdale's other general stores and their service to the citizens of this community.

While the Smoke's new store is a much glossier version of the stores that once served Troutdale -- not a single set of horse harness to be found in the 2001 version -- it still offers one thing critical to a small town store, candy and sweets.

No Troutdale General store could succeed without candy...

"Roy patiently waiting while we kids agonized over our choice of candy; having just cashed in the pop bottles we had gleaned from the river banks."

Larry Callister, Troutdale boy and now teacher at Reynolds High School recalled former Troutdale General Store owner Roy Meger and his patience with his young customers.

First store built by Kelly

Likely, the first Troutdale general store was built in 1890 by Samuel Gilby Kelly, born 1853 in Powell Valley and educated at Cedar School on Troutdale Road. Kelly, who also had a logging firm, built a fine home in Troutdale. He reinstated the Troutdale post office in 1890 and became postmaster.



Aaron Fox becomes town's store keeper

Aaron Fox came to Troutdale in 1891 from Baker City where he owned a shoe store. He either built a new general store, or bought the existing store of Samuel Gilby Kelly.

He bought Kelly's fine Victorian home on Buxton Street, settling there with his wife, Frances May Fox, and children, Albert, Milton, Emanuel and daughter, Salina.

First mayor of Troutdale in 1907 and also postmaster, Fox kept pet turkeys at his home.

His wife enjoyed roses. The sister of Emanuel May, partner in Troutdale's leading industry, the Union Meat Company, she was a founder of Troutdale PTA. An early radio owner she invited the entire Troutdale school to her home to hear a radio address by President Calvin Coolidge.

The Foxes were Jews, but supported the local church

"I would not want to live in a town that did not have a church," he said.

General Store always in center of town and its politics

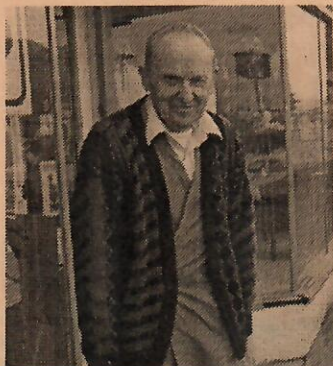
Largely to control the town's saloons and rowdy patrons, Aaron Fox helped incorporate Troutdale in 1907, becoming its first mayor. Of the first dozen laws passed by the new council, 11 dealt with saloons and imbibers.

Fox and his council got in a fight over whether their city hall should have a dance floor (Fox and other businessmen offered fine dance floors in their own buildings). Ultimately, law suits used up all the construction money and Troutdale would not have a city hall until 1923 when Fox was long dead. It did have a dance floor and many a merry night was spent cavorting there while children slept on benches along the walls. The dance floor is still there, under the seats in the council chamber.

Troutdale General Store remained at the heart of the town through the ownership of Fox's son, Milt, and his successor, Roy Meger. Deaths, births, accidents, road conditions, smelt runs -- all were dispensed over the counter.

Roy Meger was Troutdale's grocer for half a century

Troutdale's most beloved grocer was Roy Meger who operated the Troutdale General store for 50 years. With his sister, Elsie Simnitt, Meger dealt with storms, smelt runs, robberies, pan handlers, hungry dogs and thousands of kids hemming and hawing in front of the penny candy.



His store was across the street. Restored, it is now Troutdale Vision and boasts the original wood floors.

Meger began his career working for Milt Fox, son of Aaron Fox. He left Troutdale to go to war during World War II, returning to buy the store. He sold it in 1980 in an attempt at retirement, but

bought it back four and one-half years later, posting a sign in the window that declared, "Open Under Old Management." He sold it for the last time in 1995 and died three years later.

A soft touch for kids, dogs and just about anyone down on his luck, Meger ran his store in an era when people kept charge accounts at the store, when good customers got a box of chocolates at Christmas and when meat was still cut on an old butcher block.

Following the 1907 fire, Milt Fox built this new general store next door to the Hotel Troutdale and across the street from the present store. It was burned in the 1925 fire.



Terry and Jodi Smoke launch store that evokes memory

Terry Smoke, a member of the Troutdale Historical Society Board of Directors, and his wife, Jodi, came to Troutdale three years ago from Gresham to build and operate Nostalgia antiques, part of the new north side businesses that parallel the Union Pacific Railroad tracks through Troutdale.

The new 7,000 square foot Troutdale General Store caters to a different crowd. This new general store offers gourmet ice cream and pastries, designer beer and breakfast and lunches. There is, of course, the candy -- Neccos and Walnettos, chicken bones -- and the pop, Orange Crush, Grape Nehi and old-style Dr Pepper.

It is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

"All our business is old business"

Troutdale Historical Society

The Troutdale Historical Society's job is to remember and help preserve Troutdale.

We greet visitors at the Harlow House and Barn, just around the corner at 726 E. Historic Columbia River Highway, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday and Thursday through Saturday, 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.

Or, visit our Rail Depot Museum and museum store, straight down the street at 473 on the historic highway. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Closed Tuesdays.

Want to join? Call 503-661-2164.