

A History of Echo Hill Country Store

For the sake of some background, a few facts and happenings prior to the beginning of
Echo Hill Country Store are in order. By Luke S. Weaver

A few background facts:

In 1955 my father, Harvey B. Weaver, bought the small farmette property where Echo Hill is located. The property was adjacent to H.B. Weaver's larger farm where the family resided and farmed. Some years later the family moved to the Echo Hill property, and lived here for a few years.

The property was then already named as *Echo Hill*. It had been so named by the wife of a couple who had owned and lived on the property some years prior. She chose the name because in certain weather conditions, when she called her husband for a meal or for other reasons; an echo would answer back. Hence the name. When the small barn was being painted, she had the painter put the name on the front of the barn, above a colonial style window. Later when the barn was repainted, the name was covered up with the new paint, however, in time the name again began to shine through the paint, and the name endured.

In 1964 Weaver's Hardware Store was founded here on the Echo Hill property, by my father. As a youth, I worked with my father in the beginnings of the new store. During this time my parents lived on the property. The new hardware business prospered, and after a short time it was moved a few miles to its present location.

New residents...

After my parents moved, my older brother and his family lived on the place for several years. In the fall of 1972, after they vacated the place, my wife and I took up residence at Echo Hill. At that time we were a young couple with one child. Eventually we had a family of five children; two boys and three girls.

A few years later my father made it possible for us to purchase the property, which we did. Here we lived for 35 years, until the summer of 2007. The house is now occupied by our son Ornan and family. They are the third generation of the Weaver family making their home here.

A Business Evolves

First, a stove shop....

In 1974, I was employed with my father at Weaver's Hardware store. Because of a gasoline and heating fuel shortage and sharply escalating prices; customers at Weaver's began asking for wood-burning stoves. Since my father was not interested in branching out into that trade, my wife and I decided to take a venture of our own into business. We cleaned out the old original Weaver's Hardware store building, and found a supplier for a certain brand of wood-burning stoves, and a new business was born. We started out with one brand and one model. Although at first the availability of stoves was very limited, the industry responded quickly to the new demand, and more brands of stoves soon became available. Thus, the new business grew.

During the course of the stove business; in 1980, the old original store building was removed, and the main part of the current Echo Hill facility was built for the stove business.

Then a new venture...

Although the stove business prospered, it was a very seasonal business, plus there were other factors about the stove business that we did not relish. For that reason and others, we began exploring other ideas of other business pursuits that would be more constant, and that would afford more opportunity for our family to work together as a family project.

After a time of deliberation and research, we settled on the idea of a bulk and specialty food store. Then, in

search of a name for the new business, we considered a number of options, but the most appealing choice was to revive the Echo Hill name from the old barn.

And so, in June of 1981 the doors were opened for business as Echo Hill Country Store.

The lady who had named the farm was now an old widow lady, however, a short time after the store was open, she had someone bring her to the store specifically to thank us for using the name she had chosen. She said, "I named your store", and in a sense she was absolutely correct.

Finding our niche....

For seven years the stove business and the food business existed together. However the food business grew steadily and the building facility was soon too small. So in 1988 the stove division was closed and liquidated. There were of course other factors involved in this decision.

The food business answered the family togetherness idea very well. Some of the long-time customers will remember our young children being around the place when they were growing up. As they grew older, they were involved in the business. Thankfully our customers were patient as our children were learning by hands-on experience. Today some of our grand-children are now involved in the business.

In 1994 we constructed a major addition to the building, and the interior was totally renovated. Several times since, we have done minor renovations in an endeavor to optimize the use of our space and to serve the customers better.

Changes and memories...

Although the original ideas and goals of the business did not really include employment opportunities for others; it soon became a necessary part of the overall activities. In various ways this was a positive step forward.

From 1981 to the present, there have been over one hundred different people on the pay roll. For good reasons a few of these were of short duration; however many others worked with us for years.

Many of them were young ladies of family relatives, church friends, and neighbors. Many of these young ladies left when they got married and had families to take care of. Some have chosen to go on to other occupations in life.

There have also been a number of men who have worked in the business for a number of years. Some of them have also gone on to other occupations.

Some of you will surely remember Verle Wadel. He was our dependable chief cashier for about seven years. He passed away on the job, on a very busy Saturday in 2007. His death was caused by an aneurysm, that was a result of Marfan Syndrome, a rare, incurable disease.

Also, many of you will remember Wade Koehn, Ron Penner, and Lonnie Unruh who each contributed years of their efforts to the success of the store.

Currently there are four full-time men employed in the business. They are our two sons, Dana and Ornan; plus Jerry Ensz, and Lewis Sauder.

All of the above mentioned people have been a part of the general success of the business. Much credit goes to all the faithful employees, past and present.

Into the Future...

Our goal for the future is to continue to meet the needs of the community in a way that will be a blessing for our customers, and for all the Echo Hill personnel. Our aim is to continue to offer quality foods and services to the best of our ability. We will endeavor to stay abreast with new products and services, and make changes when advantageous or necessary. All of this of course is subject to our abilities and a blessing from the Lord.

Acknowledgements...

In the course of the past thirty some years, there were, of course, many lessons to be learned. That was very much the case from the beginning, and the learning still continues. Naturally, mistakes have happened, some of which have at times caused some grief or disappointment for the customers. Thank you, to all of you, for your pardon and forbearance when we have failed.

A Heartfelt Thank You...

Much gratitude is due to all of our loyal customers. Many have been steady patrons for years, and some have been customers for all of the thirty years that the business has existed. A hearty thank-you is due to all of our customers.

We also owe a warm thanks to our trustworthy suppliers; some of whom have been of much help to us over the years.

During the span of years we have made many friends, and have had many interesting experiences. It is our wish that the blessings could continue.

- Luke & Esther Weaver -