



# Early General Store Marks 170th Birthday



By Steve Freeman

With the snap of a rusty spring closing a screen door, visitors to the T.C. Lindsey & Co. General Store are transported back in time. The store sits at 2293 FM 134 in the community of Jonesville located 17 miles east of Marshall and six miles west of the Louisiana border.

Somewhere along about a decade after the Republic of Texas formed a businessman named William Harrison Jones started the unsettled area's first trading post and post office. The year was 1847.

Although the location was remote, settlers needed his business with its growing variety of merchandise like farm tools, clothing, and shoes for all ages, food, linens, medicines, toys and more, so they went out of their way to get there.

This hidden gem marks its 170th birthday this year with a celebration at the store from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. November 4. The 3,000-square-foot store keeps the ambience of days gone by and mixes in new products to serve today's market.

The manager, Jonathan Miller, whose mother's maiden name is Vaughan, says his great great grandfather, Dr. Samuel Vaughan, bought into the store in about 1870. In time, the Lindsey General Store was a Vaughan/Miller family business entirely, he says.

In the 1970s brothers Sam and Tom Vaughan saw the value in turning the store into a living museum of commerce. They placed new and interesting items for sale next to items quickly becoming antiques. Some merchandise had price tags and some (antiques) didn't.

"My grandfather's brother had a cast iron stove in the store and he told everybody 'It's not for sale.' Then in the '80s, someone offered a ridiculous amount of \$1,000 and he sold it — but he always regretted it and never sold anything else," Miller says of the museum-type items they don't want to leave the building.

Miller figures it's a 50-50 percentage division of the new and the old merchandise in the store today that attracts visitors from near and far.

Visitors still find a collection of children's shoes in original boxes, as well as brand-new blue jean overalls and replicas of women's bonnets in the clothing section. Games that a grandfather can remember playing as a child sit next to new games that today's youth enjoy.

Popular sections in the store include the front facade of an old post office window, old candy machines, the slice-your-own cheese wheel, and the fireplace with an inviting rocking chair nearby.

Nostalgic purchases popular with shoppers include pocket knives, working kero-

sene lamps, and mayhaw jelly.

The authenticity of the store draws in more than lost travelers with its interior sometimes used in movie and television productions. Also, Miller says, because the store has occasionally appeared in popular travel guides, he regularly meets tourists from faraway places like Sweden, Germany, and Japan.

Otherwise, Lindsey's retains its best-kept-secret status. And that's okay.

"We prefer a slower pace to life," he says. "Something to be said for slowing down and getting away from the main road."

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy dignitaries to occasionally veer off the main road and visit was a young girl who bought Cracker Jacks® there many moons ago. She went by the nickname of Lady Bird and lived just 15 miles north at Karnack and she became the First Lady as the wife of President Lyndon Johnson.

Imagine the stories this old treasure could tell from the years gone by as it keeps making new memories every day.

T.C. Lindsey & Co. General Store is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. They are holding their annual Christmas Open House from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. December 9. Call 903.687.3382 or visit their Facebook page for more information.