

Hastings Store

Celebrating 108 Years at Home in the Northeast Kingdom



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Hastings Store has been serving the community since 1853 and remarkably has been under the same family ownership for 108 years of its 168-year history.

There's a country store on Route 2 in West Danville where you can pick up some groceries, homemade baked goods, beer and wine, a bottle of spirits from the liquor agency, post some mail and indulge in some of the best donuts anywhere.

You can also get married.

The Hastings Store — an iconic red, two-story structure with white trim sitting just off the southeast tip of Joe's Pond — has served its community and legions of seasonal campers and leaf peepers since it first opened the doors in 1853. Perhaps most remarkably, 108 years of that stretch has been under the ownership of members of the Hasting family.

"It runs deep in my veins," says owner Jenny

Rafuse, great granddaughter of the store's original owners. "There aren't many stores in Vermont, or even in the country, that can say the same family has owned it for 108 years."

According to town history, the store opened by the mid-1850s. In 1913, Jennie Underwood Hastings and Gilbert Hastings bought it, and the family's legacy was set in motion. It passed down through generations, and by 1974, Jane Hastings Larabee and her husband, Garey Larabee, were handling the daily operations. Jenny Rafuse, their daughter, was born into the ongoing story, and before long she was running through the place.

"My earliest memory of the store is putting up freight when I was little," Rafuse says.

"The canned goods would come in on the trucks, and I used to climb up all over it and

My mom was a justice of the peace, and one day a couple came in. I think they were up for the weekend hunting. The man said they had gotten a marriage license and they wanted to get married — now. So they did it right here.

BY BILL BURKE

Spring Sippin'



90 POINTS
TASTING PANEL

CODE: 031132
\$14.99



94 POINTS
TASTING

CODE: 077474
\$19.99



Elderflower Lemonade

1 ½ oz. Grainger's Deluxe Organic Vodka

1 oz. St. Elder® Natural Elderflower Liqueur

2 oz. Lemonade

Shake & pour over ice.
Garnish with a Lemon Wheel.

SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR SMART PHONE CAMERA for an instructional video on how to make this delicious cocktail!





The town post office, found right inside the Hastings Store, dates back to 1946.

put it up. I was probably 5 years old."

The West Danville native and registered nurse grew up just above the store, where her dad still lives, and when it came time to choose a career path, there was never a question Hastings Store would be part of it. For Rafuse, the store was as much about following in the family business as it was about continuing to fill a long-time role in this particular corner of Vermont.

"It's a staple in the community," she says. "I didn't want it to fade into the background. I live here in West Danville with my family, my kids are here every day, and my husband is in and out. I just like it."

Walk up two steps, cross the porch and step inside, and you'll be greeted by a table packed with baked goods. The checkout counter is on the right, grocery on the left, which leads to the dairy case, ice cream case, chips, soda and wine. There have been changes over the years, including the addition of lottery, providing meals to go ("Today it's mac and cheese and a hot dog, but we also do soups and homemade pies," she says of the

rotating and diverse menu), and the addition of an agency liquor store.

The liquor store itself fits perfectly with the country store décor, offering Vermont-made products and a range of spirits.

"We've done a few tastings with St. J Distillery," Rafuse says. "We've added some specialty shelving — it all fits in perfectly."

Mornings start early for Rafuse, who arrives around 3:30 a.m., greets her dad with a cup of coffee and starts baking — usually the astoundingly popular donuts.

"We're best known for our donuts," she says. "We make phenomenal donuts from my grandmother's recipe. We make 50 dozen a week, at least."

The secret?

"We fry them in lard — people say it makes them better."

Another link to the town's and family's past: the store's post office. Ralph Hastings took over the role of post master in 1946. When he retired at 77, it was as longest serving post master in the state. Drop by, and you can still post a letter.

"We do have an old-fashioned post office that still runs," Rafuse says. "It's open four hours a day."

And in fact, you can get hitched at Hastings Store — spouse not included. A number of (hopefully) happy couples have done just that over the years.

"My mom was a justice of the peace, and one day a couple came in," Rafuse says. "I think they were up for the weekend hunting. The man said they had gotten a marriage license and they wanted to get married — now. So they did it right here."

Now Rafuse is a justice of the peace, as is her father. As she points out, that means customers can get their groceries, liquor, mail, get something notarized and, if the stars align, get hitched.

"We've done several weddings in front of the post office and in front of the counter. We're a full-service store here." ☺

Hastings Store

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