

Sharon Trading Post

Longtime Vermont destination upgrades, retains historic charm



COURTESY PHOTOS

Improvements and renovations, inside and out, have refreshed this longtime Sharon destination.

Christine Picken, manager of the Sharon Trading Post, grew up a self-described army brat — but when she got to Sharon, she knew she had found someplace special.

“I wasn’t born and bred in this town, but I sure like it,” she says.

At the center of it all is the Sharon Trading Post — a classic whitewashed country store, which has been standing in the same spot of this small Windsor County town of just over 1,500 people for more than 200 years.

“She used to be an old hay and grain store back in the day,” Picken says. “She’s weathered but still standing.”

The store, which traces its history back to 1815, offers groceries, deli items, gifts and a Vermont State Liquor Agency. There have been changes made over the years, but it remains much as it has through Sharon’s past.

“The house directly across the street was actually built first,” Picken says. “It was built 10 years prior to the store — you can see the same pillars out front.”

The original wood floor can still be seen in sections throughout the store, which often

causes Picken to wonder who may have walked across it, and what the store itself has seen through the four distinctive pillars out front during its long life along what is now Route 14, not far from I-89 and just a stone’s throw from the White River.

“That’s all we ever think about,” she says. “We think about how the heck this place got to be what it has become. And while the back of the store is new, it was added on later, the front is still the same traditional 200-year-old part of the building.”

The only constant is change, and recent upgrades and renovations at the store have

BY BILL BURKE

Spring Sippin'



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Elderflower Lemonade

1 ½ oz. Grainger's Deluxe Organic Vodka

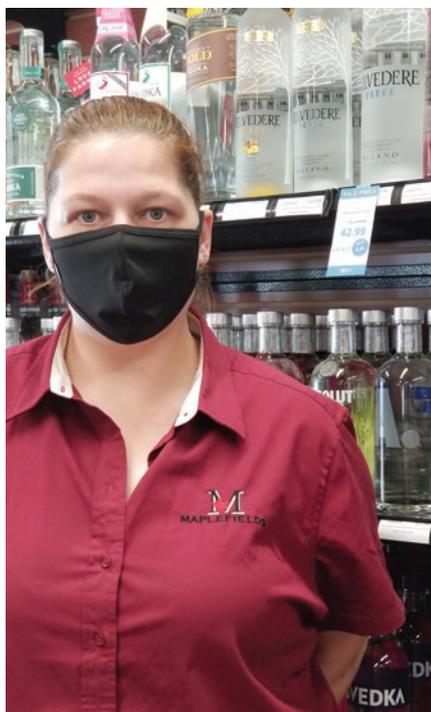
1 oz. St. Elder® Natural Elderflower Liqueur

2 oz. Lemonade

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

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Store Manager Christine Picken.



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made it even better, Picken says. R.L. Vallee Inc. acquired the store from longtime previous owners Rob and Cathy Romeo, and a plan was formulated to bring back traditional characteristics of the original space. The roughly 2,800-square-foot space increased by about 4,000 square feet, the four pillars in front were refurbished, the deli has been enlarged and given a new look with a My Fresh Cafe area, and bay windows — which were part of the old store — were installed across the front.

“We’re switching up the liquor agency, doubling the area,” Picken says. “It’s just a small chunk of the store, but people love it.”

Metal and wood shelving hold a wide selection of spirits, including a section of Vermont-made products, and a pair of antique butcher blocks — one more than 100 years old — display the month’s sale items. Picken says the soul of the store remains intact.

“We kept the historical charm of the place,” she says.

Residents and travelers along the interstate have stopped in for years, often for the store’s best-known items: its selection of butchered meat.

“We cut our own steaks — Delmonico, strip steaks, pork pinwheels — I mean, if you call in a special order, we’ll get it,” Picken says, adding that while they can’t grind hamburger any longer, they do get it provided locally. “The cow is mooing on Monday, and it’s packaged on Wednesday. It’s Vermont local beef.”

Most notably, however, is the addition of a new entrance in the front of the store. Walk through one of the two front doors and visitors are looking straight at the deli, turn to the right

and you’ll be looking “right at the smiling faces of the best cashiers,” Picken says. To the left, the liquor agency, deli and produce; look down and you’ll see rows of thin, wooden boards — another connection to the history of the Sharon Trading Post. It’s a little worn in places, but Picken says it, and the generations of Sharon residents who have trod across it, are what makes the store special.

“Honestly, it’s the town,” the mother of four says. “I don’t know how better to explain it. This is such a good community with some of the best people I’ve met in my life — and I’ve traveled a bit. People come in and feel at home, and it’s nice to know you made it that way for them. It’s a community place, and without that community this store wouldn’t stand. “When you walk through the door, we treat everyone like family. You just don’t come across places like that anymore.” 🍹

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