



James J. Mackin Photo

Unbeknownst to Springs residents and patrons, the Springs General Store suddenly closed its doors over the weekend.

Doors Close For General Store

By Kelly Ann Smith

Local residents who went into the Springs General Store last Saturday — much as they did every day for their morning coffee and paper or lunch — found that owner Henry Bremer and his family were selling off the entire inventory of the shop at half price.

After nine years of service to the Springs community, the Springs General Store closed abruptly on New Year's Day because of an ongoing and apparently irreconcilable dispute between Bremer and his landlord, Michael Collins, over the store rent.

"It's a very sad story," sighed one neighbor and regular patron. "It was a great store. There are no country shops around anymore, certainly not as charming as the Springs General Store."

Part Of the Family

Bremer agreed that it was a sad day for all. "It was an emotional scene at the counter," he told The Independent. "My parents and children worked at the shop. We'll miss our customers who were really part of the family more than friends or customers."

Bremer explained that he had been negotiating with Collins since October and hoped even on the last day of the lease a deal could be worked out that would enable him to continue his family business. Alas, that did not happen. "I could not accept the terms of the lease," Bremer said. "It was a quick decision, but I could not stay if I could not pay and Collins would not come down."

Because of increasing competition, he said, the Springs General Store was

losing business every year for the last three years and he was finding it more difficult to make ends meet. "How much can I raise prices?" Bremer asked.

Landlord Surprised

Collins, however, told The Independent that Bremer "never even approached me" to negotiate the five-percent per year rent increase. He said he spoke to Bremer about it only last Friday night when the shopkeeper came to the landlord's home to give him the news of shutting the doors. "It was a surprise to me," said Collins.

The landlord couldn't say enough about his ex-tenants. "They were good people," Collins said. "They worked hard and paid their rent. They were conscientious and kind. An old man once told me there were three sides to every story: his side, her side, and the truth. If you keep your ear to the ground you'll hear anything."

Springs residents came to depend upon the store "as a place where you can always pick up milk on the holidays," according to another patron, and being that it was open seven days from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

As Collins suggested, "Things change. Nothing lasts forever. I already have a list of people inquiring about moving into the space."

Future Cloudy

The Bremer family's future is less secure at the moment, with no immediate plans except to find another job. But Henry Bremen told The Independent that he "wanted to thank everyone who visited the shop," and he

wishes his extended Springs family "a healthy and happy New Year."

Judging by the disappointed faces of customers outside the closed shop the last couple of days, the new year did not start off too promising.

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