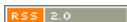




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### 84 years ago... three eggs traded for a spool of thread

Thursday, 05 March 2009

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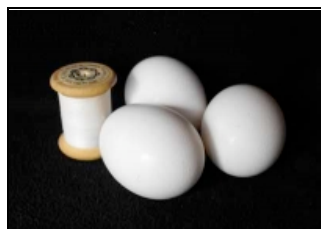
#### Bartering comes back to life at Cowee's Rickman Store

It was late winter of 1925 when a young man full of ideals and high expectations opened the doors of what was going to become a historic place and a living example of community life in Cowee — the T.M. Rickman General Store. To commemorate this anniversary and the legacy that Tom Rickman passed on to us, the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT) and the Friends of the Rickman Store invite the community on Saturday, March 7, to revive his first business experience, bartering.



Bartering is the voluntary exchange of goods and services and was a common way of doing business in Macon County in the past. The first business transaction Tom Rickman made at the store was not for money. He knew well that his neighbors were not wealthy people, and that they depended mainly on the fruit of their work and of their land to cover their basic needs. The first patron who crossed the threshold of his new store came with a need but without cash. Eva Bryson, however, did not leave empty handed. She received the spool of thread she needed in exchange for three fresh eggs.

Those who knew Tom Rickman and who shared with him some of the 69 years during which the store was in his hands, have many good things to say about him and testify on the character of his business.



"Few people knew what a philanthropist he was," wrote the late Walton Smith referring to the canceling of credit accounts that Tom Rickman would give to many families during the depression years. "He was a fine man and a man of community," says Bill Evans remembering the times where people would gather around the pot-bellied stove behind the store to share stories and news. "He was one of the finest gentlemen I have known in my life," says Ed Brogden who recalls helping Tom burn hundreds of unpaid customer bills over the years. When questioned why he

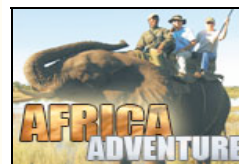
preferred to burn the bills than to collect the money, Tom Rickman would reply "I am glad I had what they needed."

The success of the store and its service to Cowee Community would have not been possible without the helping hand of Fannie Rickman, his wife, who joined him in life and business a year after the store opened. And it was precisely through bartering that Tom and Fannie first fell in love by sharing the secret messages she wrote him on the eggs she brought in to trade for groceries.

Tom Rickman passed away in 1994 but his legacy continues today. Those who came after him understood the value of the store and took good care of the historic building. In 1995, the Store was purchased by Ron and Donna Schrichten who ran it for several years before selling it to Autumn Simon. In August of 2007, LTLT purchased the store to help preserve the heritage of Cowee. The Friends of the Rickman Store are working with LTLT to open its doors, to raise funds for the project, and to invite residents and visitors to events to share in the fellowship and the vision for the future.

On Saturday, March 7, the T.M. Rickman Store will open its doors to celebrate its 84th anniversary with a bartering day. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., everyone is invited to swap baked goods, produce, crafts, books, music, seeds, plants, farm tools and more. Neighbors will have the opportunity that day to post descriptions of items they have at home that they would like to trade for what they need. "We anticipate that it will be a festive day that will continue to strengthen our community" said Elena Carlson who encourages visitors to attend and offers to provide more information on how to get involved in the celebration by

EXTRAS



calling (828)369-5595.

The historic T.M. Rickman General Store was built in 1895. It is on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Cowee-West Mill Historic District. It is located on Cowee Creek Road, seven miles north of Franklin on Highway NC 28, next to the Cowee Elementary School.

The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee works to conserve the waters, forests, farms and heritage of the upper Little Tennessee and Hiwassee River Valleys. Visit [www.ltlt.org](http://www.ltlt.org)

The legacy of Tom Rickman continues this Saturday, March 7 with a bartering day in commemoration of the 84th anniversary of the opening of the T.M. Rickman Store.

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