

'It was a meeting place'



Eva Murphy/The Dominion Post photos

Jim Cottrell is a lifelong resident of Point Marion, who has enjoyed a successful career as a plumber and recently made a councilman for the Borough, has now opened Jim's Point Marion Hardware.

100-year-old store builds new life from former employee

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"That's my handwriting, from back in high school," said Jim Cottrell, pointing to the slips of paper labeling the aged, darkened wooden drawers that line the walls of the hardware store at 126 Penn Street in Point Marion. He is a lifelong resident of Point Marion and has enjoyed a successful career as a plumber, his services in demand in both Pennsylvania and West Virginia. He was also recently made a councilman for the Borough. Despite his busy schedule, he opened Jim's Point Marion Hardware in February 2023. So how is his forty-year-old handwriting on storage drawers in his newly-opened store? It's kind of a long story.

That exact spot on Penn Street has been continuously occupied by hardware stores for well over 100 years. Between the years 1900 and 1910, the population of Point Marion more than doubled, and a vibrant merchant district sprang up to support the needs of the growing community. It was around 1910 that Frank Sadler first opened a hardware store on Penn Street. Cottrell keeps a 1915 map of the Point Marion Business section handy. It shows "Frank Sadler's Hardware Store" just west of the B&O Railroad passenger depot on a bustling stretch of road that also hosted a confectionery, a theater, and a department store.

A fire devastated that block in the early 1920s. According to Fayette County property records, the current building was constructed in 1923. The facade, with its protruding brick details and wide front windows, telegraphs the quintessential Main Street America look. Shortly after construction, the interior was equipped with then-revolutionary Duluth Equipment display shelves and storage drawers, which were thought to increase sales by creating attractive displays that drew customers' eyes to products.



A look at the Point Marion Hardware sign. The store carries electrical, plumbing, and select automotive supplies, as well as tools for both home and garden, and also plans to serve the community by carrying bicycle parts for cyclists.

The location seemed to work well as a hardware store. Even as owners came and went, a hardware store is just what it remained for many years. In 1982, a previous owner asked a teenage Jim Cottrell if he wanted a job. Cottrell accepted, and took on many duties in the store, including labeling the old storage drawers. But the hardware store was more than just nuts and bolts. Even as a young man, Cottrell noticed how the space served another important function in the community. "When I was a teenager working here, all these old timers would come in here for hours at a time to talk," he said. "It was a meeting place."

Cottrell worked at the hardware store until the 1990s and then sporadically over the last few decades as well, even as he built his thriving plumbing business. The hardware

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store saw many owners come and go during those years.

In October 2022, the then-owner shuttered the business, leaving a void in the fabric of Point Marion. “A couple of people in town said, ‘oh, you ought to open it up’”, said Cottrell. Robert Delansky, who owns the building, agreed. He approached Cottrell and encouraged him to make the hardware store his own. “And I thought, you know, it may not be a bad idea,” remembered Cottrell. He had been so long associated with the store that many people assumed he already owned it. “I thought I’d give it a try,” he said.

Cottrell declined to gut and renovate the building, preferring instead to keep

historical details such as the Duluth shelving and original hardwood floors intact. But a modern business demanded that some new elements were brought in. Shelves with open bins for hardware storage were brought in. “You don’t get that bulk stuff you can dump in the drawers anymore,” Cottrell said, pointing out the shelving with open bins that make more sense for hardware sold in today’s packaging. Merchandise is displayed on rotating racks and pegboards incorporated into the century-old space. “It’s the best of both worlds, the old and the new,” said Cottrell.

When getting the store ready for its grand opening, Cottrell mentioned to Delansky that he would like some antiques to display throughout the space. “He came over with a couple of truckloads that he bought at auction,”

laughed Cottrell. Many of the items Delansky sourced have interesting stories, and some of them have a local connection. Cottrell pointed out a chicken coop made of wooden slats stamped with “F. S. Sadler” — the original owner of the hardware store on Penn Street. Many coops like it were sold from Sadler’s store in the early 20th century. How that particular one ended up at auction is unknown, but to have it make its way back to that location after so long is nothing short of extraordinary.

The antiques are not for sale, but Cottrell finds that they add to the look of his store and make excellent conversation pieces.

Jim’s Point Marion Hardware carries electrical, plumbing, and select automotive supplies, as well as tools for both home and garden. Cottrell intends to carry rough cuts and will accept

pre-orders for lumber. He also plans to serve the community by carrying bicycle parts for cyclists using the Mon River Rail Trail and fishing supplies for those headed to the banks of the Monongahela. Soon he will have a system in place to allow online ordering and currently accepts all major credit cards. The store is open Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 5:30 pm and Saturday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.

The residents of Point Marion have celebrated the hardware store reopening, with over a hundred exciting responses appearing within a few short hours of the news breaking on social media. In the time since opening, Cottrell has noticed residents returning to the store to socialize as well as shop. “It’s a small town, but it’s a close-knit town,” Cottrell said. “Seeing that has been the best thing.”