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You'll find all the news at Mammaw's on U.S. 42

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SPRING VALLEY TWP., Greene County — Locals hungry for home cooking and the latest community news often head for the "farmers table" at Mammaw's on U.S. 42.

"You come down here to find out what happened," Dave Rosengarten of Spring Valley said matter-of-factly.

A fixture for most, if not all, of this small building's nearly 60 years as a restaurant, the farmers table offers a sense of the people who live in the U.S. 42 corridor — even if its name is a misnomer. On a recent Tuesday morning, Phil Hartman, 82, of Spring Valley Twp. was the only farmer at the table.

"A lot of people think it's just farmers, but it's not," said Edie Fadely, who's served meals and shared good-natured ribbing with customers nearly 14 years.

On any given day, the breakfast crowd at the farmers table, mostly male retirees, might include folks from blue-collar and white-collar walks of life, said Ed Burns, 65, a retired Dayton policeman who lives in Waynesville.

"It's a pretty diversified group in here, really," said Carl Hopkins, 62, of Spring Valley Twp., a retired sheet metal worker who's a native of Canada.

Jim Stroup, 69, of Xenia Twp., retired electrician and volunteer firefighter, often has breakfast with the men, then returns for lunch with his wife.

Consider yourself warned: conversations over coffee at the farmers table sometimes turn earthy. One recent morning, the men were sharing stories of the largest cockroaches they'd seen.

Folks who come here are the type who turn off car lights for fellow patrons who unwittingly left them on.

"We're just kind of a downhome bunch," said Tammie Brewer, who in November bought the eatery, formerly Patti's Country Kitchen. Her husband, Mike Haines, owns the motorcycle shop next door.

Bits of homespun wisdom are framed on Mammaw's walls. Among them: "Many People Have Eaten My Cooking and Gone on to Lead Normal Lives" and "Old is When it takes Longer to Rest than to Get Tired."

"This is kind of a staple for this whole area," said Sam Van-Hoose as he ate with Fadely's son-in-law, Tom Stroud.

If nothing else, Mammaw's is a good place to be when a deer's hit on U.S. 42, Rosengarten said. "I eat a lot of roadkill deer," he laughed.

Quakers, Shakers and vanishing crossroads

While places like Mammaw's give a glimpse of today's rural and small-town life along U.S. 42, the route also offers quick access to reminders of how folks lived long ago.

In Waynesville, you'll see remnants of Warren County's past at the Museum at the Friends Home, 115 Fourth St. The volunteer-run museum opened in 2000 in a former boarding house built in 1905 for elderly Quakers and unmarried women who taught at the school across the Street. It was a marvel at the time, having both electricity and plumbing exposed because the walls are hand-poured concrete.

The museum devotes many rooms to memorabilia from Warren County crossroads such as Lytle, Corwin and Oregonia, as well as New Burlington, a town torn down prior to impoundment of the Caesar Creek valley in the late 1970s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The museum houses the first Quaker settlers' lending library; some books in the collection date to the late 1790s. Other rooms focus on an eclectic mix of topics, ranging from antique children's items and the decade of the 1950s to a room that honors veterans of 20th century wars. Dolly McKeehan, the museum's curator, acknowledged the veterans room is a bit ironic given the museum building's history; Quakers are pacifists.

Museum tours, which cost \$2, include a stop at the White Brick Meeting House next door. Built in 1811, the meeting house retains its old window panes of wavy glass, as well as the original paneled floor-to-ceiling shutters that bisect the building. The shutters recall the early 1800s, when Quaker men and women held separate business meetings, said Milton Cook, the eighth generation in his family to worship at the meeting house.

Cook, 55, remembers some older Quakers eschewing the cushions on the meeting house's benches, flipping them up to sit on hard wood instead.

Attendance at the Quakers' Sunday meetings has dwindled from 50 to 60 people in the 1950s to 20 to 25 today, Cook said. Often, the only sound during the 45-minute to hourlong meetings is the ticking of an early 1900s Regulator A wall clock. The Quakers sit silently, "waiting for God to give us a message to share with everyone," Cook said. Once a member begins sharing, a conversation often ensues, he said. The meetings are "unprogrammed," meaning there is no preacher. The Quakers typically don't sing hymns; meetings end with a handshake.

The Quakers, who opposed slavery, helped make the Waynesville area a "freeway" for escaped slaves

long before U.S. 42 became a national highway in 1926.

In recognition of Waynesville's Quaker heritage and contributions to the Underground Railroad, Waynesville's public library and White Brick Meeting House will host portions of the third annual Quaker genealogy and history conference April 27-29. The theme for this year's conference: "Anti-Slavery: Taking a Risk for Freedom."

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For information, go to www.mlcook.lib.oh.us/ohioana_roommary_1.htm

The Warren County Historical Museum in Lebanon pays tribute to another religious sect that once had a local presence: the Shakers, who settled nearby Union Village in 1805.

The museum's estimated 5,000 pieces of Shaker furniture and small items, said to be the foremost collection in the Midwest, includes some gems, curator Mary Klei said.

Among them: an early 19th century tool chest made by a Union Village founder, Richard McNemar, for his son. (McNemar, like other Shakers, took a vow of celibacy, but not until after he had a family). The collection also includes a Shaker Bible printed in Lebanon in 1807 that sets forth tenets of the religion.

Union Village, established on the site of what's now Otterbein Retirement Community, peaked at 700 believers in the 1840s, making it the second largest Shaker settlement after Mount Lebanon, New York. It disbanded in 1912, and its land was sold to the United Brethren Church.

The Robert & Virginia Jones Shaker Gallery has seven rooms furnished with Shaker furniture. Those wishing to see the collection should consider calling ahead: (513) 932-1817.

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