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2025 Stan Daily Scholarship

Fulkerson Hardware

“Make a left at the hardware store.” That is something you will always hear me say when I give directions to my house, and without a doubt every time someone comes to my house for the first time they ask me, “Was the hardware store really established in 1892?” I am always excited to see the look on their face when I say yes.

Fulkerson Hardware is a historical landmark in Somis, it was a family run business that was established in 1892. Jonathan F. Fulkerson and his brother James opened a blacksmith shop in 1892 in Las Posas Valley, and it was the first business enterprise of the area. Though blacksmithing was important for the community, Jonathan knew that the invention of electricity was going to change the course of the smithing business. This caused Jonathan to leave the blacksmith shop and start his own business. In 1912, he built Fulkerson Hardware on the corner of Somis Road and Rice Street. This was the same year that electricity would finally come to Somis. Unfortunately, a little over a year after the opening of the store, it was burnt to the ground because of a lit cigar that was tossed into the trash during a late night game pinochle. Unphased by this, Jonathan bought the next lot over and rebuilt the hardware store. In 1925 he added an addition to the structure of the store on the lot where the original Fulkerson Hardware stood. The hardware store has been serving the people of Somis and Camarillo ever since. There is an endless amount of goods that can be found there. From gardening, plumbing, irrigation, and painting supplies, Fulkerson hardware has it all.

Jonathan F. Fulkerson ran the business until 1947. It was at this time that his son Jack took over. Jack would run the hardware store until 1977. When it came time for Jack to retire, his son Bob quickly took over. Bob would run the store until his “retirement” in 2020. It was at this time that he turned over the reins to his son Kyle. Kyle is now the fourth generation to operate Fulkerson Hardware, but most days Bob can still be found at the hardware store.

Having grown up in Somis, I have had the pleasure of going to Fulkerson Hardware many times with my dad. It wasn't until I interviewed Bob and Kyle that I found out that the hardware store is not only a historical artifact itself, but it is home to a treasure trove of local and agricultural artifacts. A history buff can expect to find artifacts such as ancient Chumash relics, milk bottles from local dairies, and so much more. As you pay you can even find Kyle using the same cash register that his great grandfather, Jonathan F. Fulkerson, used.

While talking with Bob, he showed me a 1912 plot map of Somis. On this map, you can see Jonathan’s handwriting on the lot where he intended to build Fulkerson Hardware. As our conversation continued, Bob also showed me an old sales log from 1914. The sales log was handwritten by Jonathan, and it showed who the buyer was, what they were buying, and how much the price was. I found this artifact to be very interesting because it allowed me to see what buyer trends were during this time along with how much each item cost. In addition to sales logs, Bob also had stacks of unused bank counter checks from the 1920s. These counter checks allowed for me to see the names of banks that existed in Camarillo and neighboring towns before big name banks would come to dominate Ventura County. The hardware store also home to a Ventura County Atlas from 1913. Amongst other things, the atlas lists various Ventura County school districts and their boundaries. It was interesting to see the names of districts listed that are no longer in existence such as the Timber School District and Santa Clara School House.

It is very rare to find any business that operates for 25, 50, or even 75 years. Fulkerson Hardware has been owned and operated by the same family for 113 years. It has always been and hopefully will be for many years to come, a cornerstone for Somis residents as well as the greater agricultural community of Ventura County. Next time you are passing through Somis, don't be afraid to make the left at the hardware store and take a dive back into local history.