



MILLVILLE LANDMARK--The distinctive cobblestone "meetinghouse" has stood in Millville well over a century, and today it went back into service as a general store - welcoming area residents for a cup of coffee if

nothing else. Virginia Boyle, shown with daughter Robin, has been working to create a genuine, old-time general store atmosphere.

-(J-R Photos)

Old-Time Atmosphere

General Store Returns to Millville

By SALLY WEEKS

For about as long as anyone can remember, the sturdy cobblestone building -- built originally as a Quaker meeting house -- in Millville has been a general store.

Up until eight years ago, that is, when the late Howard Neal and his wife Ida closed up shop after 50 years in business.

As of today, it's a store again. Millville residents can just run down the street again when they need that extra quart of milk, or that box of tissues, or that spool of thread, or that bottle of detergent, or just a cup of hot coffee and a place to chat for a few minutes with a passing neighbor.

A REAL general store is just what it's meant to be, say new operators Virginia and Larry Boyle, both long-time Millville residents.

Mrs. Neal still owns the well-preserved cobblestone building and still lives in the adjacent house, and she has been watching with interest as the Boyles again fill the store shelves with boxes and cans and displays.

It's been a family affair -- especially this week -- for the Boyles, who with their five children have spent hours eagerly unpacking the merchandise and organizing supplies on shelves, home-made counters, and new display racks. Randy, 17, Sherri, 15, Terry, 14, Tim, 13, and Robin, 11, all have been at the store stamping price labels, climbing ladders and straightening supplies as they prepared for opening today.

Friends have helped out, too, Mrs. Boyle said as she pointed

to freshly painted shelves, rebuilt steps, and dozens and dozens of boxes of merchandise which had to be unloaded this week.

Her main goal seems to be to stock a little bit of everything -- and to provide that old-time general store "atmosphere" for her customers. Groceries, fabrics, household items, general craft supplies and even a few antique items are on her list of products. So are auto and snowmobile oil and sparkplugs.

The new venture is certainly in keeping with tradition at the site. Although built originally as a Quaker meetinghouse, Ida Neal said T. A. Waite bought the building in the late 1800s when the Quaker group died out.

It then passed to Claude Grinnell and J. C. Posson, then to John Boyle (a great-uncle of present operator Larry Boyle) who worked with Grinnell.

Otis Wyman then bought it 57 years ago, seven years later passing it on to the Neals.

Mrs. Neal said she, like Mrs. Boyle, tried to carry a little bit of everything -- penny candy, boots, shoes, hardware, paint, dry goods, motor oil.

"We tried to close at 9 each day," she said, noting that frequently they didn't make it.

There always seemed to be customers.



FAMILY AFFAIR--Randy Boyle does his part in readying shelves at his family's newly opened store in Millville. His brothers, sisters and friends all have pitched in to help in the community-oriented project.