At lunch time, her other son Jay, who works as an accountant a few doors down the main street, will drop in to see his mother and his son. On a recent day, Jay chatted with a customer who revealed his secret method of making sauerkraut.

Within a stone’s throw, then, are four generations of the Moore family: Elsie Moore, Mindy Moore Daugherty, Jay Daugherty, and Jacob Daugherty. All are connected to the kind of store that is, for many of us, only a distant memory.

After Ralph set out on his own, C.D. and his wife Ellen ran the store, until they passed it on to their son, Frank, and his wife, Elsie, who in turn gave it to their daughter Mindy and her husband.

Mindy Moore Daugherty has spent her life in that store. “I worked here as a child,” she said as she pulled Jacob in the wagon through the aisles. The store sells a little bit of everything, from penny candy and kerosene lamps, to the screws and bolts that you desperately need only one of in the midst of a repair job. They still fix screens, cut glass, thread pipe, and mix paint.
“We’ve changed things a little. My grandfather and uncle had a general store; one side was for hardware, one was for groceries, and in the back was a cooler for meat, produce, and milk.” Her grandfather raised beef cattle, which he butchered and sold in the store. His butchering tools still hang on a back wall. “My dad phased out the grocery business. He said ‘None of the hardware is going to spoil.’” A wide central staircase leads to the second floor, now used for storage, but that at one time showcased appliances and clothing. In the early years, there were even gas pumps outside the store.

Mindy still has the handwritten ledgers kept by her grandfather from the 1920s. “He gave a lot of credit to people in those lean years, and customers were good about paying their bills, even though they didn’t have much money.”

C.D. Moore had one of the first television sets in the area, and when the store closed on Saturday nights, the neighborhood kids came in and watched T.V. on the second floor of the shop. His son Frank was also a forward thinker. In the early 1970s, Frank put in a geothermal heating system, with a heat pump that uses groundwater. Mindy explained that they have two wells, with a pump extracting either the warmth or the cold of the water from one well to heat or cool the building, before sending the water to the second well, where it returns to ground temperature. Though it has a few replacement parts, the system continues to heat and cool the nearly century-old business. In the winter, there is usually a pot of soup simmering on a coal stove alongside a desk where Mindy does the ordering and office work. “This makes a nice warm spot back here, and we enjoy it. We sort of live here in this area.”

During the warm months, Mindy grows vegetables and ever-bearing strawberry bushes in the store’s rooftop greenhouse. “I put up 85 quarts of tomatoes yesterday,” she said, as if it were an everyday occurrence. The store also has a large display of healthy flowering plants on the sidewalk. Mindy does not grow these herself, but chooses them carefully from area growers to sell to her customers.

Moore and Moore has remained an independent hardware store, not affiliated with a chain. “We don’t want to have some big guy in Chicago telling us what we have to sell. Nobody but us know what our customers ask for and need,” said Mindy.

The Moore family isn’t sure what the future will hold for the store, which employs two other local residents, Ida Hague and her son Eric. Mindy’s son, Jon, is in a union apprentice program, learning to become an ironworker, and young Jacob is a few years away from carrying on the family tradition. If it were up to their customers, the store would carry on for at least another hundred years. Mindy sums it up well: “One of our old customers likes to say that if Moore and Moore doesn’t have it, you don’t need it.”

Check out photos from throughout the store’s history at: http://www.mooreshardware.biz/

Bette McDevitt is a freelance writer and longtime contributor to Western Pennsylvania History.