

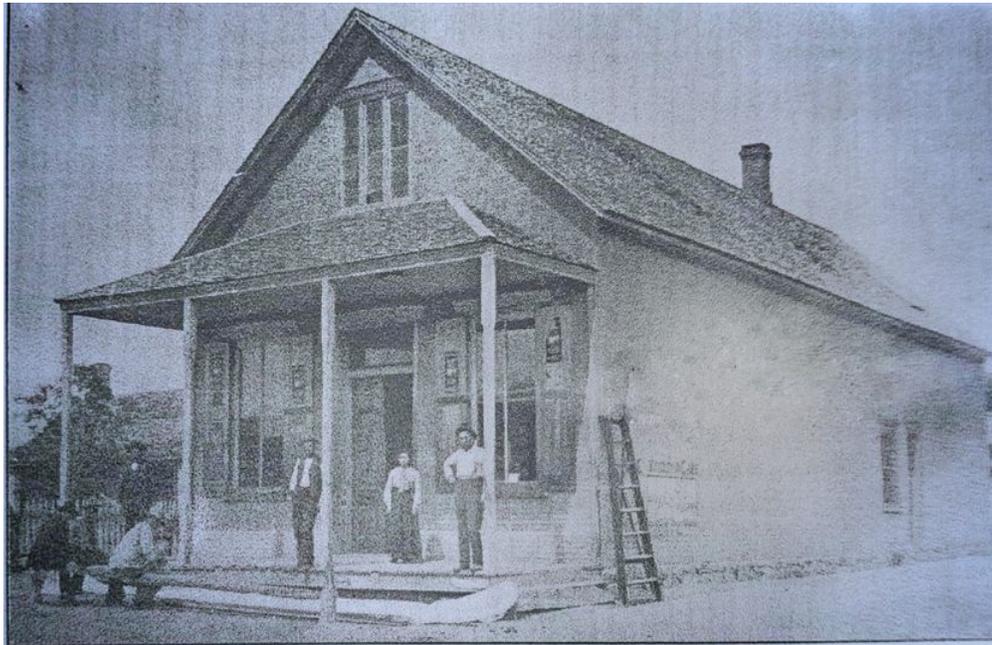
SCIPPIO CO-OPERATIVE MERCANTILE INSTITUTION

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FACEBOOK : Scipio Co-op

THIS HISTORICAL BUILDING IN SCIPPIO HAS BEEN THROUGH MANY CHANGES FROM
1869 TO PRESENT.



Andreas Peterson and Orvil Thompson's general store in Scipio



SCIPIO CO-OPERATIVE MERCANTILE INSTITUTION



Scipio co-op restored to former glory

FEATURED NEWS SAM JACOBSON

Story featured in Millard County Chronical Progress

The history of Scipio Co-op spans from 1869, when the co-op system started in Utah. The building, pictured above, sat empty starting in the 1950s. Local couple George and Lisa Lanier bought the building in 2016 and made it their mission to restore it.

A quiet piece of Millard County history has been restored to its former glory, encapsulating a brief glimpse of how life was before modern times.

The Scipio co-op building had been sitting vacant since the 1950s, slowly deteriorating from natural forces and time.

George and Lisa Lanier changed that.

The mercantile was initially a branch of the Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institution, with products sold out of the log home of the first owner and superintendent, Thomas J Yates. Yates was an influential citizen of Millard County in the late 1800s.

“The co-op system started in Scipio in 1869,” George said. “It was formally organized as Scipio Cooperative Mercantile Institution in 1870.”

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Supply and demand eventually led to the construction of the current building in the late 1870s. It opened its doors in 1883. Yates continued his tenure as superintendent, hiring Henry McArthur as manager from 1869 to 1896. Yates stepped down from his position in 1899.

Management changed directly after, with Orvil Thompson and Andreas Peterson operating the mercantile until 1916. Thompson was additionally a four-term senator for Millard County aside from his business duties.

In 1922, the business saw a third exchange of ownership; E.M. Brown obtained the store in 1922, after the dissolution of the co-op system in Scipio that year.

“Brown ran the store with local help until 1950,” George said. “And then it closed.”

The mercantile remained vacant until 2002, sustaining considerable animal and water damage.

The Laniers purchased the property in 2016, combining a labor of love with a deep interest in historical preservation.

“We purchased it with the idea it needed to be saved,” George said. “It is the oldest commercial brick building remaining in Scipio, and it is one of the remaining examples of the cooperating merchant system in Utah.”

The Laniers now operate the business as a consignment store under the co-op theme, allowing locals to sell antiques and goods there.

“We are also trying to sell local items from Scipio and Utah in general,” George said. Honey, alpaca fur, locally crocheted plush dolls and other products line the shelves.

“Our goal is to keep it as local as we can,” Lisa said. “We want to promote Utah.”

The store has been restored, not remodeled, the Laniers say.

After stepping through the nine-foot tall, original wood doors, customers find themselves caught in a time warp. The building was shored up to ensure structural stability; water damage was tended to and brickwork touched up.

“We are still in the process (of restoration),” George said. “It’s an ongoing job.”

Electricity was wired into the main rooms of the store, while still maintaining the historical integrity of the building. The floors, countertops, shelving, drawers and pulls all are original, given a fresh coat of paint or polish.

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The front of the counters still bear marks left from the early 20th century. The interior is even painted to match the color from the 1880s.

One of the few non-original things in the building is the stamped metal ceiling; George purchased that from a bank in California, ensuring it fit the time period the co-op represents.

An antique, fully functional gas stove sits close to a countertop, and is used to heat the building.

“The idea was to turn it into a time capsule of what it looked like in 1883,” George said. “But it’s also an antique, snack and history store.”



Coins and bills formed a sort of co-op currency in the early days of the Utah system.

Varied sections highlight different historical periods of Scipio and Millard County.

“We try to emphasize what people do in Scipio,” George said. “We have a section for ranching. We have a section for all of the history of the store. We have a section for the Native Americans, because the Black Hawk War was a big piece of history.”

Another section highlights Porter Rockwell and mining, and famous Mormon frontiersmen.

“We had a lady come in the other day, and she’s related to the Robbins, and I showed her a picture we had with the ear tags we have to recognize the ranchers,” Lisa said. “She got really choked up; she’s from California, but she has roots here. It was just really amazing for her to see a part of her family history.”

The front storeroom is the project’s main feature. The former granary to the east has since been converted into the town’s post office. An apartment used to house tenants above the granary before being vacated.

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“The townspeople have just been thrilled, because they remember coming here as children when the inventory was still on the shelves when the store was closed,” Lisa said of community reaction. “You just hear story after story of when people would come when they were kids.”

The Scipio Co-op celebrates its history by offering a tour through the area’s history as well as a consignment shop for locals to sell items and antiques.

“We have had a lot of support from the locals,” George said. “We’ve had a lot of help with the history section, with some of them donating photos.”

The store is a must see. Full of wonderful vintage items.
Stop by!!!

