

Penshorn's building under construction

[By Ron Maloney](#)

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As the man accused of setting a series of fires including one that destroyed Penshorn's Meat Market awaits legal action, work has begun to rebuild the store on FM 78.

This past week, Wunderlich Builders began cutting trenches for the foundation footings necessary to build a new meat market nearly twice the size of the original.

When it is finished in about four months, Leona and Leroy Penshorn plan to retire from the day-to-day operation of the business, turning the reins over to their sons, Elroy and Robert.

"They're ready for it to be done," Elroy Penshorn said Saturday, giving a quick tour of the burnt-out hole in Marion's business district that soon will once again be a thriving meat market and custom meat-cutting shop. "We're just getting started building back."

All that stands there now is the blackened walk-in cooler the Penshorns salvaged and put back on line within hours of their fire.

"Thank God we had this cooler because this saved us this year," Penshorn said.

When the Penshorns expanded their 30-year-old business from their "old store" into the new one a few years ago, they removed an old trailer house in the back and made plans to put in a new cutting room. Up until now, that hasn't happened.

"Finally, I'm getting my cutting room in the back of here that we've needed all along," Penshorn said. "When people brought their deer before, they had to bring them across the kill floor. Now, they'll be able to come straight in from right there in the back."

"Before, whenever we needed something that had been frozen, we had to walk over to the freezer," he said. "Now, it'll be right here."

What customers will notice most, he said, was a better flow around the meat counters, more shelves and aisles and an expanded product line.

"We expect to carry a few more groceries and we're thinking about having fresh vegetables and stuff like that," Penshorn said.

Passers-by who haven't been through Marion since September might not notice anything.

The Penshorns designed a facility that from the street will look very similar to the one it replaces — the one Guadalupe County Sheriff's Investigator Sgt. Bruce Tubbs and Marion Police Chief Reed Crane say was torched by Cody Ryan Cannon, who was released from jail a week ago as authorities prepare to try him on five second-degree arson allegations that could send him to state prison for 20 years.

"It'll look about like it did before," Penshorn said. "That's one thing the city wants. They want to keep the old-timey look."

That's not to say there aren't still some gaping holes in Marion's streetscape, which conjures images of Texas the way it was decades or even a century ago.

The series of arson fires began Sept. 17 with a blaze that destroyed the former Bielke service station — most recently known as Don's Auto Repair — that was once Marion's Ford dealership.

Two youths taken into custody the following day acknowledged responsibility for that blaze, but told investigators they didn't set the fire that followed less than 24 hours later that destroyed Peshorn's and Blue Moon Hall Antiques, which has been a dance hall, restaurant and saloon.

On Oct. 10, an early morning fire investigators initially said could have been accidental burned a vacant Wetz Road home.

On Oct. 24, another suspicious blaze destroyed Marion's former train depot, which years ago was moved back from the Union Pacific tracks to East Krueger and Barnett streets and turned into a residence that in recent years had been used only for storage.

On Nov. 14, another fire was set at the rear of the El Vaquero Saloon on FM 78, heavily damaging a storage area at the rear of the structure.

That blaze was caught early because it was discovered by a firefighter and a police officer who held it at bay until the rest of the Marion Volunteer Fire Department arrived to extinguish it.

Like the rest of Marion, Elroy Peshorn looks forward to moving on and to having a tough chapter in the history and fabric of the Marion community over.

Like his parents, Peshorn said he had to thank the customers and workers who stuck by his family in such a difficult time.

"We had a great deer season, and the store's been busy," he said. "We appreciate our customers and everyone who helps us."

The Peshorns will also use the new space to build a new walk-in freezer and cooler behind their new "new" store, and new sanitary facilities for staff.

Subway opens its doors in Marion

[By Tucker Stephenson](#)

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MARION — The city of Marion may be light-years away from getting a monorail system, but on Thursday, it got its first Subway.

Mayor Glenn Hild stopped by the new sandwich shop located at Schulz Nursery at noon to order the inaugural sub served at the restaurant, and he didn't spare any ingredient.

"I got the club sandwich," Hild said. "Turkey and ham — shoot the works."

But for the mayor, it was more than just a tasty lunch. The afternoon also served as another sign to him that the city is headed in the right direction.

"It's a good day for the city and a good positive for the community," Hild said. "It's the second restaurant we've opened here in a couple of months, so we're moving in the right direction. We had a few bumps last year, but we're coming back."

Following the opening of McBee's Bar-B-Que, the addition of the new Subway now doubles the number of restaurants that the town had previously, giving folks another option when they want to go out for a bite to eat.

"McBee's opened up about a month ago, so we have four restaurants in the city now," Hild said. "Both

restaurants look real nice and they fit in with the community.”

And while having the sub shop connected to the nursery may seem an odd combination at first, the garden center definitely provides a scenic backdrop for the new eatery, which is just how owner Larry Walker planned it.

“Our slogan is going to be, ‘A hundred-dollar dining experience for five bucks,’ Walker said. “That’s why we opened everything up – people will have access to seating in the nursery, in the gazebo, outside, so we think it’s a neat concept.”

On a day with weather as perfect as Thursday, it seemed to be a genius idea, indeed. But Walker also said that it was a notion that he’s been throwing around for a while after doing a little research.

“Very early when we were reading about garden centers around the country and things they were trying differently and having success, one of the things that seemed to work far more was food services,” Walker said. “People were coming to the nursery and quite a few were asking, ‘Where can I get something to eat?’ So we sort of gravitated to food service and segued into Subway because it fit what we were trying to do, and we’re just delighted.”

As far as business ventures go, Subway was a strong choice, as the chain was named the “No. 1 Franchise Opportunity for 2009” by Entrepreneur Magazine. According to the Hild, the demand was clearly there in Marion, as he reported having been asked when it would finally be open for business.

“People are very anxious about the first restaurant and then a lot of people kept asking when this day was coming,” Hild said. “I think this will be very successful for them and will be good for our community.”

As for Walker, he’s as excited as anyone about the new Subway – even if he does get to see it every day.

“The city has been incredibly helpful and supportive,” Walker said. “So we’re just elated.”