

# Camden garage revitalized

By Kevin Schnepf  
Staff writer

Though 20 years have elapsed since work was last performed on vehicles at the former Camden Auto Company, a new day has dawned on the facility.

Gary and Kelly Robey of rural Burlington purchased the building, located on Main St. in Camden, in January. First order of business for the couple was to rehabilitate the dilapidated structure.

Robey, who took an early retirement this year from Chrysler Corporation in Kokomo, said after almost a year of working on the building inside and out including, many renovations are yet to be completed but the garage is already functional. He uses the shop floor to work on vintage vehicles, both for money and as a hobby. After a tour of the storefront and work area, visitors would agree the shop maintained its historic feel.

Camden Town Board President Pete Wagoner told the Comet his grandfather started the auto company in

the early 1900s. His uncles and their sons later took over the business and kept it going for 60 more years.

The business was closed in the late 1980s. Despite having been sold twice since then, the garage was host to little activity for two decades.

Robey said a previous owner removed many original items from the building including work benches, equipment and vintage displays. When the items were put up for auction earlier this year, Robey bought most of them and brought them back to the garage.

He said he was pleased to re-install the original items and he has enjoyed working to restore them.

"Without them, it wasn't going to be quite the same," Robey said. "I had old photos I've worked from to restore the place, and I'm glad I have most of the pieces to do so."

While outside work went smooth and quick, he said he and his wife have many interior tasks yet to accomplish. He said they hope to be completely finished with



## History repeats itself

Ownership of this vintage garage on Main St. in Camden has changed hands several times through the years, but its original name is still visible on the front window and what goes on inside is reminiscent of times past. Burlington area residents Gary and Kelly Robey bought the building this year and have worked to restore it. Mr. Robey said he balances his time between restoring the shop and working on a variety of vintage vehicles. "It's what I like to do," he said. "I've enjoyed putting things like vintage vehicles and this old shop back together." Comet photo by Kevin Schnepf

the restoration next year. "Painting, caulking windows and other work on the outside went pretty quick," Robey said. "There are a lot of little things to do on the inside. Once the big things

were done, I can see work on all these details that will help bring it all together."

Zoning for the building was changed to residential after the auto company closed. In order for the Robeys to be able to use the garage for paid mechanical work, the town board allowed a special zoning exception for the building. That change allowed the Robeys to follow their vision of restoring vintage vehicles there. If the couple stops using the facility, the zoning will change back to residential.

Wagoner said he was pleased with the Robeys' interest in restoring the building and locating their business in Camden.

"It's a nice improvement to the town," Wagoner said. "He's excellent at what he does. We couldn't be more happy."

The remodeled structure might pique the interest of passers-by. Robey, who also works out of his home shop, said he has no problem with visitors who wish to talk with him and see the building.

"If I'm here, sure, come on in," he said. "If I'm not, come on back tomorrow."

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## Piecing it back together

Gary Robey is shown working on a carburetor from a 1948 Indian motorcycle at a workbench inside the former Camden Auto Company on Main St. The bench where he does carb work is original to the shop, custom-made to house the work's variety of essential parts. Removed along with other shelves and pieces of equipment by a previous owner, the workbench was bought back at auction and re-installed by Robey. He and his wife spent the year restoring the structure, which was re-zoned for business so he could work on vintage vehicles in the shop. Comet photo by Kevin Schnepf



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Phyllis Moore, Curator  
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entries. Call (765) 564-3152 rollcountymuseum.org.  
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The Carroll County Historical Museum has the following new books in its genealogy section:

- 'Baum Family' by Thomas W. Smith;
- 'Sydenbender, Sidenbender Family History' by Barbara Westbrook;
- 'Eel River Tribe of Indiana' by Mike Floyd;
- 'L'Anguille-Snakes in the Grass' by Mike Floyd;
- 'Vagabond Hoosier, Life of Evert Laurence Kuns' donated by Charles and Betty Pharris; and
- 'Kind Words Never Die - Life of Chester and Opal Kuns Family' by Eric Flora.

Sharon O'Farrell donated some very old deeds with family names of Young, Baum, Lynn, Ashfield, Flora and Stauffer. These were copied and put in the family files for public viewing.

Mrs. Harold Burkhalter donated Sugar Creek Conservation Club books dated from 1935 until the club was dissolved.

Also donated was a rawin-sode. The weather parachute device was used by Joseph Peterson on his farm.

The museum will rely heavily on volunteers in light of losing its county funding for full-time personnel. Those who like working with people and are interested in history can help the museum make a difference by volunteering. Help is needed with computer programming, document scanning and database



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