

“Everybody talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it!”

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

Whether you find this to be a quote of Mark Twain or Charles Dudley Warner, it still holds true. However, in 1924, the management of the Otsego County Farm Bureau did their best to help out by announcing that arrangements had been made with Buchanan Hardware Company to broadcast the harvest weather forecast to the farmers near Richfield Springs on the Otsego and Delaware telephone exchange. The harvest weather forecast was made available after July 1st and continued for the months of July and August. Those farmers who wished the service could get the forecast by calling the Buchanan Hardware Company any day during the week between the hours of 11 and 2.

Several years prior to that date, Professor G. F. Warren, head of the Department of Farm Economics and Farm Management who operated a large general farm near Ithaca, began the practice of calling the Weather Bureau office daily by phone to see if the weather conditions were favorable for cutting hay. He insisted that the forecasts cover as long a period as possible and that it include an opinion or estimate on a percentage basis

of the risk he would run in planning his work according to the forecast. He found his special information so helpful that he urged that this sort of service be extended to farmers generally. During past seasons harvest weather forecasts had been telegraphed to the county agents in some twenty counties for such distribution to farmers as was possible. A vote, taken by phone at the end of each season was unanimous for its continuance in most of the counties. In one county it was estimated that the farmers of the county had a savings of \$25,000 through the increased value of the hay crop alone, as a result of a general use of the service.

Each farmer in the Richfield Springs and Schuyler Lake exchange received directions as to how this forecast should be used. Many thanks was given to John A. Losee of the Buchanan Hardware Company for his cooperation with the program.

This bit of helpful news brings to mind what was referred to as “old wives’ tales” by which the state of the forthcoming weather was, in some cases, accurately predicted. Do you remember - or have others that you recall-

or have others that you go by that have proved helpful in making your plans?

Halo around the moon - take warning of rain or snow; Red sky at night, sailor’s delight - red sky in the morning, sailor’s take warning; Thunder in winter signals snow seven to ten days later; Cows laying down, rain with abound; Achy joints? Cold weather is on the way; The more black on caterpillars, the harder the winter; Clear moon and there will be a frost soon; When clouds appear like towers, the earth is refreshed by frequent showers; Rain before seven - quit by eleven; Onion skins very thin, mild weather coming in; The number of fogs in August will equal the number of snowfalls in December; The number of shucks on ears of corn will tell you how hard the winter weather will be; If there are bubbles on the puddles, it will rain for three days; The more berries and nuts available, the harder the winter will be; When swallows sit on the telephone lines, rain is coming; If leaves are showing their backs - rain will come in 24 hours; When goldenrod blooms, look for the first frost within a month; Wind from the east is neither good for man or



beast; Smoke going straight up is a sign of good weather; Birds fly high - no worries from the skies; Geese heading south is a sign that winter is on its way.

For a yearly forecast, you might consider the following:

January - Fog in this month brings a wet spring.

February- Fog in this month means frosts in May.

March - Thunder in March means a fruitful year.

April - If it thunders on All Fool’s Day, it brings good crops of corn and hay.

May - A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay.

June - When it is hottest in

June, it will be coldest in the corresponding days of next February.

July - Ne’er trust a July sky.

August - If the first week in August is unusually warm, the winter will be white and long.

September - Fair on September first - fair for the month.

October - Much rain in October - much wind in December.

November - Thunder in November will mean a fertile year to come.

December - A green Christmas equal a white Easter.

When all else fails - look out the window before setting forth!