

# A STOP AT THE ST. JAMES

*Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits*

One of the lesser known hotels - built from the framework of another hotel - having some new creative ideas in the hotel world - always advertised along with the Earlington Hotel - this was the St. James Hotel, owned by Eugene H. Earle and son.

To get the background for this particular establishment, we need to look at another hotel which existed at the time called the Davenport House. This was located on Main Street between the Earlington and Tuller Hotels, across from Spring Park and was owned by the Honorable James S. Davenport who started his once popular hotel in 1850. He was married to Harriett Tuller. In 1891, Eugene H. Earle purchased the Davenport House with its 150 foot veranda and had it torn down to replace it with Earlington Park which provided not only a beautiful park, but a perfect place for bicycle riding, polo ponies and a variety of seasonal activities. During WW1, the Park was plowed up and made into a Victory Garden. The Park he established was right next to the his hotel so that his patrons had full advantage.

Being practical, Earle decided to use parts of what was

formerly the Davenport House to create a new hotel, to be located on the south-west corner of Manley and James Streets, opposite what is now the location of our fire house. It served as an annex of the Earlington Hotel but was run with the same commitment to its visitors as all of the other hotels in the Village. It faced the lawns and bicycle oval of Earlington Park.

A testimony was given by a gentleman who had dined at the St. James and found it surprisingly delightful with its excellence and comfort. He stated that probably few of the summer guests knew that there was such a thoroughly delightful house in Richfield. The dining room was said to be by far the most attractive in town. It was carpeted and furnished in perfect taste. The parlor was a dainty white and gold room. The writing room was papered and furnished in green and gold. A glass encased piazza, heated by steam, where one could enjoy a sun-bath and be comfortable regardless of cold autumn winds, leads from the writing room. The bedrooms were large, handsomely furnished and had roomy closets for all of the rooms facing the outer

side. It was advertised as newly finished and furnished, lighted by electricity, equipped with the best toilet and sanitary arrangements and affording baths on every floor. The house was specially planned to meet the requirements of those wishing to stay later in the season.

The staff in 1904 included: auditor and cashier, Geo. W. Binkle; room clerk, John R. MacDonald; night clerk, E. B. Callahan; housekeeper, Miss Kate Keenan; steward, Charles F. Beck; head porter, William Rillery; head waiter, James Russell; head bell man, William Jackson; parlor man, Samuel Reed; chef, Michael Repp; stenographer and typewriter, Miss Christine Bergolth; chief engineer, Hugh Gray; and room clerk, Charles B. Hanft.

In 1907, legal notices of the sale of both the Earlington and St. James appeared in order to satisfy judgments issued.

In 1914, the St. James Hotel was purchased at auction by Frank Loomis and Charles Ostrander for \$245.00 but an injunction was served on the purchasers to restrain them from further demolition of the property and indicated that they may be compelled to replace parts already taken



out. They stated that the house was bought in good faith from Mr. Robinson of New York who was thought to be the owner.

Apparently things were straightened out by August of 1914 when a sale of furniture from the old St. James Hotel commenced. Mr. Blackman of the Earlington opened the sale with a speech which was clever and eloquent. He spoke with feeling of the association of which the furniture could speak, had it but tongues, with

men and women of the national and world-wide net in the years gone by and his words and the sentiment they expressed were said to have made one reluctant to break the charm of the grand old furniture from its home, even though others were able to possess it. Mr. Blackman was a noted orator and his voice had been heard in many gubernatorial and national campaigns.

Following the sale, the building was torn down in October 1914.