

EVERYONE WAS THERE IN 1924!

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

Advertised as an 'Anniversary Fair', it was said to have been the best of its kind ever held in Central New York - the first from the standpoint of profit-sharing bargains and liberal prizes. The occasion was the celebration of the 75th anniversary of Buchanan Hardware Company held in 1924. To conduct business for seventy-five years on the same spot, in the same place and under the same name is yet another record and to commemorate the event, Mr. John A. Losee, president of Buchanan Hardware, decided to stage a three-day fair. Representatives of the wide range of items that were for sale at the store were present for the event with exhibits of their wares. There were, of course, prizes given each day: First day - a bevel-plate glass mirror with white enamel frame with value of \$6.00; Second day - a three-burner New Perfection oil stove with shelf and oven with value of \$35.65; Third day - an Andes range with gun-metal top and high warming closet with value \$125.00. The many major lines that were in operation such as oil stoves and ranges were proving their baking qualities. Brushes appeared with all their cleaning secrets, gasoline engines operated to demonstrate their various uses and many similar attractions were shown. For those not having the benefit of water systems, Buchanan's had installed a Gould's Auto-water' system showing the wonderful possibilities of a water supply from wells and tank storage for kitchens and bathrooms. The Winchester Repeating Arms Company was there with a display of guns and other products of their manufacture. The DeLaval Separator Company gave a three-day service schedule where owners could bring their separators and receive the benefit of free overhauling. (Used by farmers to separate raw milk into cream and skimmed milk - the cream used to make butter). The warehouse was the scene of activities as well, with demonstrations of gas engines, roofing, and water systems, etc. Chef Teabout served free lunches throughout the day and evening. A special

feature of this lunch was a baking demonstration in the range and oil stove department on the second floor. A rest room was arranged for the comfort and convenience of the customers.

A total of 2030 adults, an average of nearly 700 each day exclusive of boys and girls of school age, attended the celebration. Losee planned the affair, wanting to present something similar to the Richfield Fair where men and women planned to spend each afternoon there, coming back in the evening. The store was very well stocked, all spic and span. Losee, his assistants and the demonstrators were ready to greet everyone with a smile and kind word. Visitors inspected the store, made purchases, visited with friends and drank the limitless supply of coffee.

Milo Anderson was the envied one when he was given the New Perfection oil cook stove. Mrs. Anderson carried away the set of Pyrex dishes in the first evening. Mrs. Frank Jordan received the aluminum tea kettle the same evening. A stranger who happened in, C. L. Eddy of Syracuse, received the aluminum roaster with S. S. Crony of East Springfield receiving the Andes Range. William Feldman secured the Fairbanks-Morse engine; Mrs. E. C. Woolever, the \$10 mileage book; Rev. D. C. Davies the fishing pole and reel; Mrs. Charles Sommers the set of Winchester carvers; and a special cake made by Chef Teabout went to Mrs. Floyd Waffle of Jordanville.

The company was generous with souvenirs, giving away different articles each day. The various salesmen who were there, assured the Mercury that the event had never been equaled in their experience.

Robert Buchanan was born in Glasgow, Scotland, coming to settle in Utica in 1854 where he carried on his trade as a tin smith. He came to Richfield to set up his business in 1849 in what was then known as the Hinds and Allen Block, a building that was erected by the hop firm of the same name to accommodate their business. He married



Jane Ann Owens in 1840 in Glasgow and settled in their home here on Church Street. In 1888, Mr. Buchanan's son-in-law, Eugene A. Hinds, came into the firm which then became known as R. Buchanan and Co. Robert died of pneumonia in 1896, having conducted his store for forty-four years. At the time of his death it was said that he had been in the stove business longer than any other man in the state. His wife died in 1905. They are buried at Lake View Cemetery.

It was reported that Mr. Buchanan was a gentle, kind, lovable man of unassuming character and integrity who was a friend to many, especially children, in whom he had a special interest. Described as a sunny hearted man, he could often be found sitting in front of his store surrounded by a group of children, listening with genuine interest to them and never tiring of their presence. He is quoted as saying: "I would rather make these little ones happy than anyone else in the world."

Mr. Losee was a school boy when he started to work afternoons and Saturdays for Robert Buchanan in 1892. Because of his work ethic and vision, he continued to move up in the business to become the president of the company. After the death of its founder the firm incorporated under the name of Buchanan Hardware Company in

1899. Through the years, other hardware stores in various locations were added to the company.

On the last night of the celebration fireworks marked the end of the celebration and the tired workers were served food along with words of gratitude to those who had made the days so special. Mr. Losee presented the members of the store force with cash remembrances and boxes of candy and cigars.

In 1949, the 100th anniversary of Buchanan's was celebrated in much the same manner. The list of prizes given certainly indicated the advancement and change in daily life of citizens. Among those listed were: freezer, electric mixer, pressure cooker, radio and coffee maker. Also changed was the expansion of the business which now had twenty employees overall and eight service trucks.

For several decades, the store was the hub of village activity where you could find anything and everything for the home and farm. The business continued here into the 1970s after which a variety of business were housed within the historic building which stills stands on Main Street. All but the newest generations still refer to it as 'the old Buchanan's' where you were certain to find what you needed along with a welcome greeting.