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Fairport Memories: Early gas stations



As the popularity of the automobile grew in the early 1900s, enterprising citizens recognized the need for additional gas pumps and service stations.

The prominent corner of Main and Church streets in Fairport became an attractive location for developers. Construction did not come without controversy, however.

Residents argued for and against gas stations at the Fairport Village Board meeting of Feb. 4, 1924. Those who favored the new stations prevailed, as before long, three of the four corners at the intersection were occupied by sellers of gasoline.

In 1920, Merritt A. Russell operated a curbside fuel pump and tire repair stand on North Main Street. In 1924, he began construction of his gasoline station at the southeast corner of Church and Main streets.

Local contractors were utilized to build the new station. Carpentry work was performed by Moses Roberts of 42 Perrin St. Heating and electrical work was completed by John Bahler of 9 West St. The masonry contract went to Claude Lumbard of 33 Dewey Ave. Russell was congratulated by the local newspaper for "keeping the dollars in Fairport."

The photo above was featured in a 1925 newspaper on the one-year anniversary of Russell's business. The new building was connected to a portion of the old house that was on the corner. In this photo, a portion of the house remains, forming the eastern wing of the structure. This section was later replaced with service bays.

By 1946, Russell was ready to retire. He sold his business to Charles Schnepf and Lawrence Hall. The new owners offered Texaco products and sold Dodge and Plymouth automobiles. They named their new franchise Church Motors. By 1953, the business outgrew the building, and Church Motors was relocated to a new building at 65 S. Main St., now occupied by Nothnagle Realtors.

For the last 89 years, automobiles have been maintained and repaired at 111 S. Main St. The longest period for any one proprietor is that of the current owner, Wade Ingerick. He has operated his business, Dial-A-Tire, at this location for about 40 years. Ingerick appreciates the history of the building, as is evidenced by the old photos he has on display.

Photo and text provided by Bill Poray, Perinton town historian.