

# Dixfield history repeats itself

by Bruce Farrin

DIXFIELD — Back in the early 1950's, 36 Main St., the site of The Corner Store, used to be a Gulf station known as Knox Garage.

Now it's history repeated as Gulf will be the supplier for the new, larger convenience store and gas station rapidly taking shape beside the town's fire station.

John "Chip" Towle, owner of the business, said H.A. Mapes, Inc. of Springvale will supply Gulf gasoline to the business.

Besides negotiating a fair contract for the supply of gas, he said he selected Gulf for several reasons:

\* Gulf is in process right now of upgrading their image and marketing. "The new canopy and dispensers I'll be installing in a few weeks will have the new look on them. The company is investing in new advertising promotions and programs. I will be able to offer their fall promotions to our customers at opening," said Towle.

\*Gulf is based in Newton, MA and has an extensive gas supply distribution system throughout the northeast of the US.

\* Gulf is offering a great gas card program. They offer a co-branded Mastercard offers consumers 3 percent off of Gulf gas

purchases and 1 percent off everything else.

The new 4,000-square-foot facility is four times the size of the present store, which Towle said the business had outgrown.

He said the new business will be a wireless hot spot and will have a full size kitchen with limited seating in booths. The business will also feature 12 cooler doors and three freezer doors.

Besides Gulf gasoline, another hallmark feature here will be Green Mountain coffee.

"We'll be offering a lot of services which will be great for Dixfield," said Towle.

Right now, he anticipates an opening somewhere around the end of October or early December.

Towle, son of Norman "Butch" and Donna Towle, owners of Towle's Hardware and Lumber, will be the fourth generation to operate a business in his hometown. He follows in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, Charles Towle, who began the hardware store in 1911. John L. Towle then took it over until Chip's parents took ownership.

He had worked for 10 years for director of information technology for Wheelock College in Boston, MA.

Towle's parents bought the

existing 28-by-58-foot convenience store in 2001 from Irving fuels, which operates Bluecanoe convenience stores, and renovated it.

As the new store gets close to completion, the old store will be torn down. The transition between the old store and the new one should only be a few days. The fuel island will have four fueling positions, while a canopy will be installed. It will also be easier to access than the present pumps.

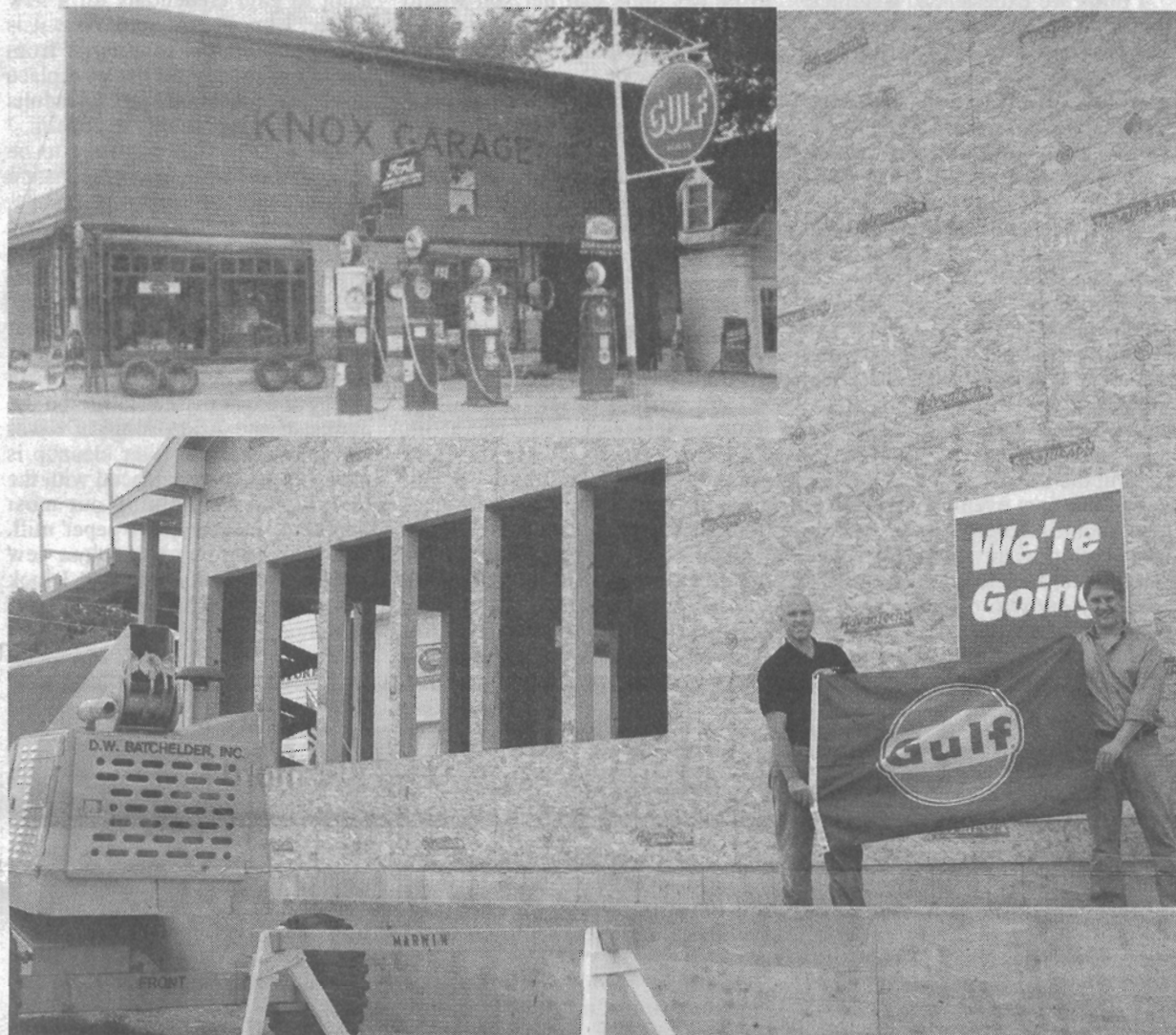
The new parking lot will add about 10 more spaces to be used for both the store and hardware business.

The Corner Store presently has 12 employees. Towle said that number will not change in the short term, but more could be hired in the future.

Towle also keeping a daily blog describing what's happening at the building site at <http://www.towle-cornerstore.com>.

On the website, he has a camera mounted at the hardware store that updates every three minutes views of the new store that visitors can see.

Towle said "I'm hoping this site can serve as a virtual view to all of my supportive family and friends and any others who are interested in this project that might not be close by."



Standing beside the new 4,000-square-foot building in Dixfield are owner Chip Towle (right), with Chris DeCato, sales representative with H.A. Mapes, Inc., which will be supplying Gulf gasoline to the store. (Times