

# Wilkins Hardware maintains 100-year tradition

A more than 100-year-old tradition is being maintained on Butler Street.

Wilkins Hardware, located on the north end of Saugatuck since 1864, has been owned by the Wilkins for the past four years.

The business is open year-round and has been the only hardware store in Saugatuck since its first opening.

It's a unique place to visit. Employees know most of the customers by name and can help them find things throughout the store.

"We carry a little bit of everything," said Ron Wilkins. "From tools, paints, lawn care and garden tools, to custom cutting glass and threading pipes, we go out of our way to take care of our customers."

This past spring a greenhouse was added to the store, and for the next 120 days, at least, flowers and bedding plants also are available.

According to Wilkins, if the store doesn't carry an item, it will be special ordered for customers.

"We have drawers full of thousands of catalogs we can order from," he said.

He added that customers also may set up a charge account with Wilkins.

"It's really very old-fashioned, except everything is computerized," said Wilkins with a grin.

The hardware store traces its history to 1864 when John Nies opened his business. He hired John Koning in 1875 and two years later Nies and Koning became partners. The name was then changed to Nies and Koning Hardware. When Nies sold out to Koning, the store became Koning Hardware Co.

In November 1903 the store and five other buildings in the area burned. In 1904 the present brick building was built. An elevator was installed to run from the first floor to the basement. According to Wilkins, the elevator is still used "occasionally" today.

The store changed owners several times over the next 80 years, until in the fall of 1984 when owner Dick Kofsky closed the store.

The Wilkins purchased the business in 1985 and opened it that same year.

"We came to the area looking for a bed and breakfast to

open," said Bonnie Wilkins, "and then saw the ad for this store. Purchasing it seemed the thing to do."

## Country Peddler show to open

The Country Peddler show is scheduled to come to Charlotte for its first annual show and sale at the Eaton County Fairgrounds June 10-12.

About 75 folk artists traveling from across the United States will sell and exhibit 18th and 19th century heirlooms of the future.

Food, music and "country spirit" are promised for the event. Artisans from as far away as Missouri, Texas and Maine will take part. Other exhibitors will be from more local communities such as Lansing, Leslie, Grand Ledge and Portand.

Featured will be dulcimer music by Wes Linenkugel.

Some examples of the works on display will be tinsmithing, rug making and basket making. Also included will be teddy bears and rabbits, herbs, potpurri and wreaths.

Show hours will be Friday, June 10, from 5 to 9 p.m.; Saturday, June 11, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission price for each day is \$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children ages 2 to 10 years.



THE STAFF OF Wilkins Hardware store on Butler Street includes (from left, back to front rows) Rick Smith, Ruth Smith, Kevin Hahn,

Chuck Ricket, Mike Carey, Ron Wilkins, Bonnie Wilkins and Nancy Swanson.

Commercial Record photo

2nd Floor above  
Saugatuck Gallery

Singapore Bank Bookstore



(616) 857-3785  
Judy Nye Hallisy

317 Butler  
P.O. Box 630  
Saugatuck, MI 49453

Cafe Sin Douglas