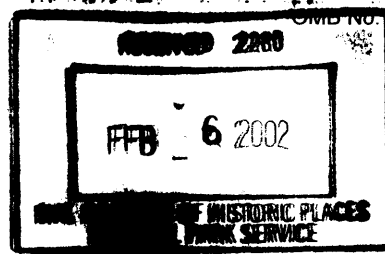


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire Department Building
other names/site number Chuck's Auto Trim

2. Location

street & number 104 N. Chamberlain St. N/A not for publication
city or town Rockwood N/A vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Roane code 145 zip code 37854

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Hays 2/4/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 - determined not eligible for the National Register
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other,
(explain:)

Elsa A. Beal 3/20/02
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Molyneux Chevrolet Company /
Rockwood Fire Department building
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing

Noncontributing

1	buildings
_____	sites
_____	structures
_____	objects
1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

WORK IN PROGRESS

GOVERNMENT: fire station

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store, restaurant

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: two part commercial block

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

roof Rubber roofing

other GLASS, METAL, WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations NA

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1923-1951

Significant Dates

1927

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

East Tennessee Development District

Molyneux Chevrolet Company /
Rockwood Fire Department building
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately one acre Rockwood 123 SW

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 708823 3971666
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda L. Wild, Historic Preservation Planner
organization East Tennessee Development District date September 24, 2001
street & number 5616 Kingston Pike, Post Office Box 19806 telephone 865-584-8553
city or town Knoxville state Tennessee zip code 37939

Additional Documentation

submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Tim Robinson
street & number 104 N. Chamberlain Ave. telephone (865)354-0314
city or town Rockwood state Tennessee zip code 37854

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

VII. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 1923 Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire Department Building is situated in downtown Rockwood at 104 North Chamberlain Street. The building is located behind the First National Bank on the west and a creek and a municipal building on the east. The two-story building is constructed of poured concrete walls with decorative concrete pilasters and it has numerous multi-light steel windows. The poured concrete was poured in forms, with reinforcing rods, and resulting in a block-like pattern. Constructed as a single building to house two separate businesses, historically, the fire hall was in the easternmost bay, and the Molyneux Chevrolet Company in the three western bays. The fire hall section of the building has a flat roof, but Molyneux Chevrolet has a hipped roof with a ridge, and rubber roofing. The building is L-shape in plan, with the Chevrolet building extending back further south than the former fire department.

Rockwood (population 5,348) is located approximately forty-five miles west of Knoxville, on the eastern slope of the Cumberland Plateau in western Roane County. The Plateau is part of the coal-rich Appalachian Mountains, which runs from Pennsylvania southwest to Northern Alabama. Roane County is traversed by numerous streams and by three rivers: the Tennessee, the Clinch, and the Emory. Watts Bar Dam was constructed on the Tennessee River in 1942, forming Watts Bar Lake east and south of Rockwood. The Clinch River was dammed by Melton Hill Dam in the northern part of the country in 1963. There are abundant deposits of coal and iron in the surrounding ridges.

Exterior description of both buildings

The facade (north elevation) contains four bays, with each bay separated by a concrete pilaster. Entrances to both the former fire department and the Chevrolet building are located on the facade. A large garage opening in the first bay originally opened into the fire department. During the years that the building was occupied by the fire department, there was no covering on this opening. For security and safety reasons, this opening has been boarded, and will be replaced with a compatible garage door during the building's renovation.

The second bay contains the service entrance into the Chevrolet building. Originally the entrance contained a glass door with a single light transom above the door. The door was flush with the exterior wall. The present entrance is recessed and contains a modern aluminum door. This opening enters into a small vestibule with two doors leading into the building. The entrances are original, although new aluminum doors have replaced the original doors. The door on the south

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

wall opens to a staircase, which leads to the upstairs of the fire department. The door on the west wall leads into the service department lobby. During the restoration of the building, the original design of the entrance will be returned. Aside from the entrance, the second bay also contains a large single light fixed window with a rectangular two-light transom above the window.

The third bay contains a large garage opening into the former Chevrolet building. Although the garage door is new, the original opening has not been altered. The fourth bay contains a large single-light casement window with a two-light rectangular transom located above the window. The windows are presently boarded for restoration.

The second story contains six windows, with two each in the first and second bays and one in the third and fourth bay. In 1997, the prior owner replaced both of the windows in the first bay with smaller one-over-one double hung windows. Concrete block was used to fill in the remaining space created by the removal of the original windows with the smaller replacement windows. The remaining four windows are the original sixteen-light steel windows with awning openings. All of the windows have concrete sills.

The east elevation of the fire department contains four bays separated by concrete pilasters. There are four small rectangular three-light windows in the first story. The second-story contains four one-over-one double-hung windows. The original twenty-light steel windows were replaced with smaller one-over-one double-hung windows in 1997. As with the two replacement windows on the façade, these replacement windows are smaller than the original windows; so concrete block is used to fill in the remaining space created by the removal of the original windows. The present owner intends to replace the windows with twenty-light steel windows during the building restoration. All of the windows on this elevation have concrete sills.

The south (rear) elevation of the fire department contains two bays. There are two small three-light rectangular windows in the first story. There is one twenty-light window, and one replacement double-hung window in the second story. The replacement double-hung window is smaller than the original window; so concrete block was used to fill in the remaining space created by the removal of the original window with the smaller replacement window. All windows have concrete sills.

The east elevation of the Molyneux Chevrolet Company Building contains five bays separated by concrete pilasters. With the exception of the fourth and fifth bays, from south to north, there is a twenty-five light steel window in the first story of each bay, and a twenty-light steel window in the second story of each bay. All of the windows along this elevation have awning openings and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

concrete sills. In the fourth bay there is a narrow concrete chimney. A shed roof extension of the Chevrolet building is located along the exterior wall of the fourth and fifth bays. The shed served as the coal room for the building. The coal room has concrete exterior walls and contains no windows or doors. It has a tin sheet roof.

The south elevation of the Chevrolet building consists of five bays with concrete pilasters separating each bay. The first bay, from west to east, has no windows or doors. The second, third, and fourth bays each have a twenty-five light steel window in the first story and a twenty-light steel casement window in the second story. In the fifth bay, there is a garage door in the first story and a twenty-light steel casement window in the second story. Each window has an awning opening and a concrete sill. Although the garage door is new, the garage opening is an original feature to the building.

The west elevation of the dealership contains nine bays with a concrete pilaster separating each bay. With the exception of the second eighth, and ninth bays, from north to south, there is a twenty-five light steel window in the first story and a twenty-light steel window in the second story. All windows along this elevation have awning openings and concrete sills. In the second bay there is a twenty-five light steel window in the first story, and two nine-light steel casement windows in the second story. The eighth and ninth bays have a covered passageway on the first level and a twenty-light steel window in the second level. This passageway historically connected the original Molyneux City Garage, which was located on Rockwood Avenue to the Molyneux Chevrolet Company building. Both buildings are now separate and while the passageway still exists between the buildings it is no longer utilized. Different owners occupy the buildings, and only the Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire Department Building is being nominated the National Register of Historic Places.

Interior Description

Molyneux Chevrolet Company Building

The interior of the building retains many original features including hardwood floors, wood doors with paneling and glazing, wood staircases, and beaded board walls. The Molyneux Chevrolet Building is entered by a single door into the original lobby. The lobby has beaded board walls, and a service counter on the south wall and an eight-light window on the west wall, which looks into the garage. The service counter contains a sliding glass window that allowed for transactions between the office and the lobby. An original door, which leads into the service department or garage, is located in the west wall of the lobby. This door is paneled with three vertical wood panels in the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

bottom half and one large glazed panel in the upper portion. The original script, which reads "Waiting Room" is visible on the door.

The service department or garage is a long rectangular room with a concrete floor and poured concrete walls. The structural support system is visible in the ceiling. The support system resembles the construction of a bridge with sixteen support beams and iron rods. A door, located in the northeast corner of the garage, leads into the fire department. This original door has a single wood panel in the bottom of the door and a large rectangular glazed panel. The original hardware remains.

A staircase is located in the southwest corner of the garage. A pocket door, which is suspended by counter weights, leads to an enclosed, two-flight wood staircase. The upstairs of the Molyneux Chevrolet Building has hardwood tongue and groove floors. The expanse of windows upstairs provides for natural lighting. A support system of beams and rods tie the first and second stories together. The upstairs contains a large open room in the rear of the building. This open space was used for storage and also as a showroom for appliances. The owners have recently added a partition wall near the front the building. A wall was originally located here, and the owners followed the ghost markings on the floor during construction. The front of the building contained four offices. The walls that separated each of the offices have been removed, creating an open space, with ghost markings show the location of the original walls. There is a restroom adjacent to the office on the west wall. This is the historic location of the restroom, however, the walls are new construction as are the facilities.

Along the east wall of the upstairs is a second stairway. This is the same stairway that is accessible from the main entrance on the front elevation. A narrow hallway upstairs leads to this staircase and also to a double-door entrance to the living quarters of the fire department. This stairway is an enclosed, single-flight stairway with beaded board walls along the west wall. The double-door entrance contains the original doors with two rectangular wood panels in the lower portion of the door and three vertical glazed panels in the top portion and a covered three light transom.

Rockwood Fire Department Building

Historically, a large garage opening led into the fire hall. Presently, the door opening has been boarded up in order to maintain the security of the building, and to protect it from the elements.

From the interior of the Molyneux Chevrolet Building, the fire hall is also accessed through a door in the northeast corner of the garage. The first story of the fire hall is a single large room where the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

fire truck and fire equipment were stored. The floor and walls are concrete, and the ceiling is beaded board. Also in this area is a fire pole, which connected the upstairs living quarters to the firehall garage. While the fire pole is new, the location is original, as is the opening in the ceiling.

There are two entrances into the fire department from the upstairs. One entrance is adjacent to the four offices in the front of the building. This entrance is a single door that leads into the fire hall meeting room. The second entrance is the double door entrance, already mentioned, at the end of hallway and the staircase.

In addition to the meeting room in the upstairs of the fire hall, there are two other rooms and a bathroom. All of the rooms retain the original room configuration and hardwood floors.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

VIII. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Molyneux Chevrolet Company and Rockwood Fire Department building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in Rockwood's history, specifically in the areas of commerce and politics and government. The building is located on Chamberlain Street, which is a street perpendicular to Rockwood Blvd., the main street in Rockwood's downtown. The building played a prominent role in Rockwood's history, housing the city's first fire engine and the Chevrolet business of John Molyneux. This business was later recognized as being the oldest Chevrolet dealership in the state of Tennessee. The building is a good representation of Rockwood's history and of its growth and development after the failure of the mines in the 1920s.

Background

Rockwood's founding and early development are attributed to mining interests. The region's rich coal resources and the expansion of rail service attracted industry to the area. The organization of the Rockwood and Tennessee River Railway on June 18, 1867 made it possible to haul ore from the mines to the river landing for shipment to Chattanooga. The Cincinnati-Southern Railway, constructed between 1874 and 1879, eventually established a primary distribution point in Roane County. The completion of the Cincinnati-Southern Railway enabled Roane Iron Company to expand the market for its products.

The first substantial development in Rockwood occurred in 1867 with the founding of the Roane Iron Company by northern investors including Abram Hewitt, John T. Wilder, and Hiram S. Chamberlain.¹ A furnace was completed and the first cast made in December of 1868. According to the census, there were just three hundred people in the vicinity. By 1870, however, there were nearly seven hundred residents.

It was not until the Roane Iron Company began selling lots to outside interests in the 1880s that the town of Rockwood expanded. The town was incorporated in 1895 and the economy boomed, as men formerly associated with the Roane Iron Company became competing merchants, independent contractors, and local captains of industry. In 1902 the mayor and alderman voted to exempt from taxes for five to ten years any manufacturing concern employing 50-100 persons.

¹ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes: A Traveler's Guide* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 234.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

By 1907 the town boasted a population of nearly 5000. Rockwood had an electric light plant, and local and long distance telephone service. All together, there were eight staple or fancy grocery stores, four dry goods stores, two drug stores, four meat markets, two jewelry stores, three shoe shops, two dressmakers, two blacksmith shops, a furniture and undertaking store, two bottling works, a flour mill, a grist mill, a machine shop, a wagon shop, a feed store, two hotels, and two banks. The diversification of the town's economy provided for its survival through severe economic depressions and the failure of the mines in the 1920s.

Molyneux Chevrolet Company Building

By the 1920s, the town of Rockwood reached such a level of independence from Roane Iron Company that the company was openly criticized by the citizenry and by the local press. Periodic slowdowns at the blast furnaces and the failure of similar iron works in other parts of East Tennessee convinced civic and business leaders to encourage a broad manufacturing economy that depended on export and outside investment instead of on the capital of the Roane Iron Company.

John Molyneux emerged as a business and civic leader during the late 1910s and 1920s. John Molyneux was born in Lancaster County, England in 1853. He moved to the United States in 1873 and resided in Philadelphia until he returned to England in 1875. Molyneux returned to the states in 1881, this time settling in Glenmary, Monroe County where he was a merchant, operated a sawmill, and pursued lumber interests. He came to Rockwood in 1906 and owned a lumber business. In 1916, John Molyneux organized the City Garage with his son, Harry. The City Garage was one of the first businesses in Rockwood to serve and repair automobiles and trucks.

The 1920s brought social conservatism and vigorous civic improvement to the town of Rockwood. The aldermanic system of government was replaced with a city commission in 1921, which immediately began to overhaul the city. Twelve miles of sewers were constructed, new lighting was placed along Rockwood Avenue, and five miles of city street were paved in addition to twelve miles of state road that was paved between Kingston and Rockwood. Where the Roane Iron Company had sponsored social and educational organizations early in the town's history, newly formed organizations like the Civitan Club took on the responsibility of improving educational facilities. The Business and Professional Women's Club began sponsoring the public library in 1922.²

² William Howard Moore, *Company Town: A History of Rockwood and the Roane Iron Company* (Kingston, TN: Roane County Heritage Commission, n.d.) 65.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

The early 1920s represented significant construction activities as well. On September 6, 1923, the *Rockwood Times* reported the biggest building boom in the city's history with \$75,000 of new construction in a three-block radius on or near Rockwood Avenue. The building boom included the construction of a new structure for Molyneux's City Garage. By 1920, Molyneux's business had expanded. In that year, he purchased land on Chamberlain Avenue behind the First National Bank. Then in 1923, construction on the new building began and work was completed in 1924.

Molyneux chose concrete construction due to the high cost associated with brick. The exterior walls are concrete, which was relatively inexpensive, easy to make, and fire-resistant. Pamela Simpson, author of *Cheap, Quick & Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870-1930*, states, "Advertisers [of concrete] also pointed out that it was fireproof, required no paint, and needed little care. Its fireproof qualities made it appealing for garages and banks."³

The estimated cost of this building was \$5,000. In a *Rockwood Times* article dated July 12, 1923, a reporter stated, "Work is being pushed rapidly and the building will probably be completed in the next few weeks. When finished, it will give Rockwood one of the largest and best equipped garages outside the large cities."⁴ Molyneux made the decision to build a large structure with much open space because he had doubts that the automobile industry would have lasting success. Apparently, he believed that with a large building, he could adapt it for another use should automobiles prove to be a short-lived fad.

Molyneux retained the City Garage and had it connected to the Molyneux Chevrolet Company building by a passageway. The City Garage served primarily as a showroom while the Chevrolet Company Building was used for repair and service work of vehicles. While the passageway between the buildings still exists, it is no longer utilized. In 1988, both buildings were separated to be sold as two buildings. Only the Molyneux Chevrolet Company Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Molyneux Chevrolet Company was quite successful and highly regarded in the town of Rockwood. John Molyneux served as the President of the company, and his son, Harry, as the

³ Pamela Simpson, *Cheap, Quick, & Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 23.

⁴ *Rockwood Times*, July 12, 1923.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

secretary. For many years, Molyneux's was the only place in town where an individual could have their oil changed.

John Molyneux died in 1934 and his son, Harry, assumed the presidency of the company. John Molyneux's business success was commemorated in an anniversary article that appeared in the *Rockwood Times*. The *Times* reported, "Mr. [John] Molyneux foresaw the great advancement of motor transportation and was one of the first good roads boosters in this section and led in this and many other progressive movements."⁵

The dealership was recognized as Tennessee's oldest Chevrolet dealership. During the thirty-fifth anniversary celebration of the company, Edmond Fowler, a long-time customer said the following regarding the company:

The story of the thirty-five years of history of the Molyneux Chevrolet Company in Rockwood is one of continuous growth and progress through two world wars, a major and several minor depressions and of good times as well. Yet the story could not be told had it not been for much hard toil, efficient management, fair and honest dealings with customers and the public, a high standard of service and quality, time-proven merchandise, the installation of latest equipment and progressive methods, and the loyalty through the years of capable workers.⁶

As part of their thirty-fifth anniversary, Molyneux Chevrolet Company hosted an anniversary celebration attended by over one thousand friends and visitors. An article in the *Rockwood Times*, stated:

The occasion gained added significance not only because the company was recognized as one of the oldest in this section under the same continuous management, but because in recent years it has gained the title as 'Tennessee's Oldest Chevrolet Dealer' and as such is regarded highly throughout the south as one of the oldest and most reputable automobile dealers.⁷

⁵ *Rockwood Times*, November 15, 1951.

⁶ *Rockwood Times*, November 15, 1951.

⁷ *Rockwood Times*, November 22, 1951.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

The upstairs of Molyneux served several purposes. In the 1920s, the large open space was used for a roller-skating rink. Molyneux invited the community to “skate-nights.” Later the main floor space was used as a showroom for Frigidaire and RCA appliances. In the front of the building’s second story were several rooms that served as offices. The Tennessee Department of Transportation was the first to locate their offices in the building. They occupied space from 1931 to 1939. Mr. Fowler, an attorney, also had an office in the building from 1934-1936, and an insurance company also occupied space.

Harry Molyneux died in February of 1958. He was recognized as one of Rockwood’s leading business and civic leaders as well as a statewide and nationally known figure in American Legion, fraternal, and civic circles. The *Rockwood Times* stated, “His many business interests included that of President and Treasurer of Molyneux Chevrolet Co., the state’s oldest Chevrolet agency, President of the Rockwood Federal Savings and Loan Association, and President and Treasurer of Molyneux Lumber Company . . .”⁸ In Rockwood, he also served as Vice President of the Rockwood Stove Works, and was director of the First National Bank.

Rockwood Fire Hall

Before the establishment of the fire department on Chamberlain Street in the Chevrolet Company building, the Rockwood had only a volunteer fire department. They leased space to store fire equipment and did not have a fire engine. With the continued growth of the town in the 1920s, the need for a permanent fire station, a fire engine, and a staff became increasingly evident to many government officials and town leaders.

The city was largely motivated to increase fire safety measures, however, for financial reasons. In 1926, Captain Holman, chief of the Tennessee Inspection Bureau came to Rockwood. He recommended that the city improve its fire prevention and safety. The city, however, did not take immediate measures due to unstable financial conditions. The following year, the mayor received a letter from Captain Holman “stating that a recent inspection of the city by Captain Rodgers, of the inspection bureau, found conditions unimproved and that he would immediately take this city out of insurance classification 4 and put it in 4 ½ class, which indicates poorer fire protection and carries a

⁸ *Rockwood Times*, February 27, 1958.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

higher insurance rate.”⁹ An increase in the city’s insurance classification would add nearly \$3,000 yearly to insurance premiums paid by local citizens.

Shortly after receiving the letter the city took action. The *Rockwood Times* reports, “An investigation by city authorities disclosed the fact that to allow the city to go back to the old classification would increase the insurance bill by several thousand dollars yearly and would also hurt the city by giving it the unfavorable publicity which would follow a backward change in insurance classification.”¹⁰ On May 5, 1927, the city held a town meeting and Mayor Huff explained that the city could either improve its fire protection or be prepared to enter a different insurance classification, which would result in an increase in the cost of fire insurance. The city decided to proceed with the purchase of a \$12,000 pumper fire engine with a water capacity of 750 gallons per minute.¹¹

With the purchase of a new engine and organization of a staff, the fire department was ready to locate to their reserved space at the Chevrolet Company building. John Molyneux provided the station with the building adjacent to his own garage. This building housed Rockwood’s first full-time Fire Department. The first floor of the fire department was for the fire truck, while the second floor provided sleeping quarters for the men. The sleeping quarters were connected to the engine room by a pole. The *Rockwood Times* noted that this design resembled fire halls in larger cities, making Rockwood one of the counties in East Tennessee with the most modern of fire departments.¹² The firemen were available at all hours of the night, and a full-time paid fire chief was hired for the day shift.

The Rockwood Fire Department remained at this location until March of 1965 when the city purchased and renovated a bus station. This new location would provide additional space to house more fire equipment.

⁹ *Rockwood Times*, undated newspaper article (circa 1926) in the possession of Tim Robinson, building owner.

¹⁰ *Rockwood Times*, undated newspaper article (circa 1926) in the possession of Tim Robinson, building owner.

¹¹ *Rockwood Times*, May 1927 .

¹² *Rockwood Times*, June 2, 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

The Molyneux Chevrolet Company remained in the building until 1979. The building remained vacant for three years until a company that had a government contract for clothing manufacture occupied the structure. Then in 1992, Kick's Body Ware purchased the building for clothing manufacture, and remained in the location until 1997. The building was vacant from 1997 until October 2000 when Tim and Debbie Robinson purchased the structure.

The Robinson's are presently in the process of renovating the building. The Rockwood Fire Department Building will be restored as a fire museum. The downstairs of the former Chevrolet business is Chuck's Auto Trim. The upstairs is being renovated into a restaurant and will be called Rockwood's Attic.

The Molyneux Chevrolet Building not only represents the growth and development of Rockwood during the 1920s, but it also demonstrates the increasing importance of the automobile in American culture. Historian James Flink asserts, "During the 1920s automobility became the backbone of a new consumer-goods-oriented society and economy that has persisted into the present."¹³ The development and success of Molyneux's Chevrolet Company represents the importance and centrality of the car culture. The building remains a significant landmark in Rockwood representing the influence of the automobile and the history of the Rockwood Fire Department.

¹³ James Flink, *The Car Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1975), 140.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 13

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 14

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

X. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Molyneux Chevrolet Building and Rockwood Fire Hall sits on approximately one acre of land on Chamberlain Avenue. It is in Section "G", Parcel 2.01 on Rockwood Tax Map No. 54-E.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundary includes the parcel of land historically associated with the Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire Department Building, and included within the original deed.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 15

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

Tax map 1" = 200' N ↑



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 16

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos By: Amanda Wild
East Tennessee Development District
P.O. Box 19806
Knoxville, TN 37939

Date: April 2001; November 2001

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

North façade and west elevation, facing southeast
1 of 27

North façade and west elevation, facing southeast
2 of 27

North façade detail, facing south
3 of 27

North façade and east elevation, facing southwest
4 of 27

East elevation, facing south
5 of 27

East elevation, facing south
6 of 27

South and east elevations, facing northwest
7 of 27

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 17

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

South and east elevations, facing northwest
8 of 27

South elevation, facing north
9 of 27

West elevation, facing southeast
10 of 27

Lobby of Chevrolet dealership
11 of 27

Service station, facing north
12 of 27

Service station, facing south
13 of 27

Detail of steel beams, first story of service station
14 of 27

Shows stairway in the southwest corner of building
15 of 27

Upstairs of Molyneux's, former showroom, facing south
16 of 27

Upstairs of Molyneux's, facing north, shows partition wall that divides the main floor space from the former front offices
17 of 27

Upstairs of Molyneux's, former location of office spaces, facing northwest
18 of 27

Rear stairwell along east wall of upstairs of Molyneux's
19 of 27

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 18

Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire
Department Building, Roane County, Tennessee

Double doors upstairs, leading from Molyneux's to the firehall
20 of 27

Upstairs of firehall, main room
21 of 27

Hallway in upstairs of firehall
22 of 27

Main room in the firehall, upstairs
23 of 27

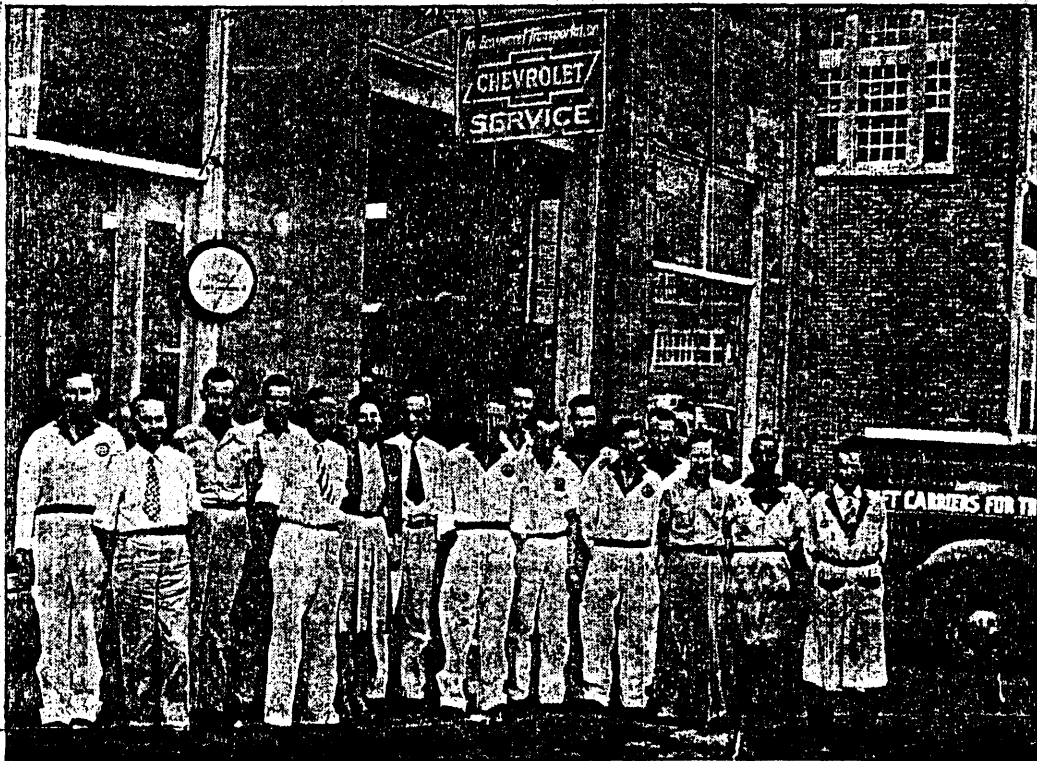
Upstairs hallway in fire hall
24 of 27

Former break room in fire hall
25 of 27

Location of slide pole, downstairs in firehall
26 of 27

Fire hall, downstairs, facing north
27 of 27

SERVICE BUILDING AND ENTIRE PERSONNEL OF MOLYNEUX CHEVROLET CO.

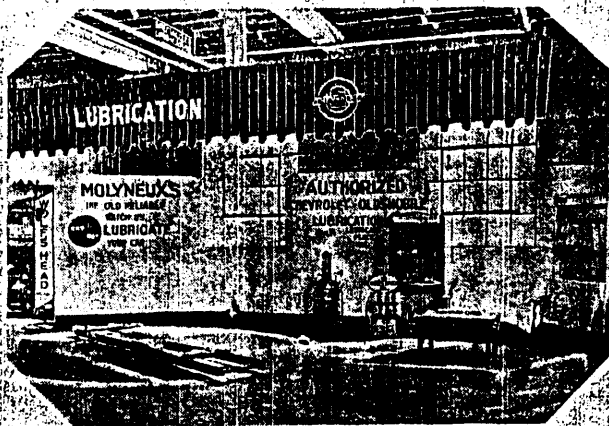


The complete staff of the Molyneux Chevrolet Company organization in Rockwood is pictured above. They are, from left to right, VIRGIL HOGUE, U. C. FULMER, BILL JARVIS, KENNETH HAMBY, HARRY MOLYNEUX, NANIE MAE BARNARD, FRED EACHUS, HENRY GRIGSBY, JOHN CARPENTER, RALPH GITGOOD, WINFRED HALL, JIMMY WHITACRE, JOHN MYERS, HARRY WHITACRE, RUAL (Hoover) McCaleb, and S. E. WHITACRE.

It Pleases Us to Have

You Watch Us

Lubricate Your Car



The Right Lube

At The Right Place

At The Right Time

LUBRICATION DEPARTMENT — CLEAN, MODERN IN EVERY WAY

*Molyneux Chevrolet Company / Rockwood Fire Department Building
Boone County TN
Historic View*