

MANITOWOC COUNTY
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FOOD AND ITS DISTRIBUTION IN EARLY MANITOWOC

by RALPH G. PLUMB

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If one were to name the first purveyor of food in Manitowoc County one answer might be to go back to the trading post established by Jean Vieau who came from Mackinac in 1795. The site of this trading post was Jambo Creek, located at a point about one and one-half miles west of the village of Mishicot and one and one-half miles north. It was situated on the east side of the creek, a tributary entering the East Twin River about ten miles from Lake Michigan.

What items Vieau traded with the Indians we do not know, but probably the exchange was in reverse as the surrounding Indians brought in the venison with their skins in exchange for his goods, usually trinkets, axes, hatchets, etc. The fact remains that he left a clerk there and on his annual trips established another post at what is now known as Manitowoc Rapids. These were short-lived ventures but it is interesting to note that another Vieau, Andrew J., did the same sort of business in 1843 at Two Rivers.

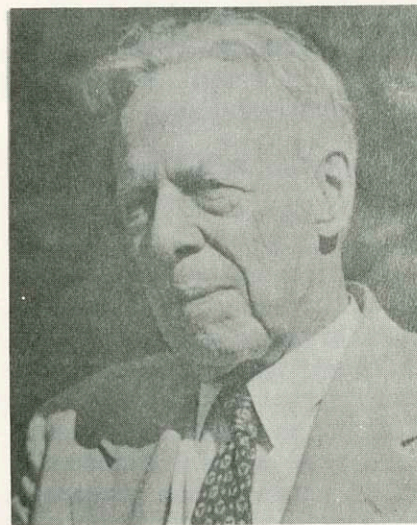
The little settlements at the Rapids, founded by the Conroe family, and at Manitowoc by Benjamin Jones, and at Two Rivers by H. H. Smith made it necessary for some venturer to start little stores at each point. At the entrance to the Franklin Street Pier in Manitowoc we find the name of Case and Clark and Musson, acting as forwarders and, among other things, handling a quantity of incoming foods. At the Chicago Street Pier there was Smith and Glover and Perry P. Smith

handling groceries among other stock in trade. The latter also was a forwarding agent. At the Rapids were Baker and Beardsley. They had as a clerk one known as Osuld Torrison who was soon to go to Manitowoc to engage in the mercantile business on York and Sixth Streets, and later to move to a new site on Eighth Street, thus founding the department store of O. Torrison Company at the corner now occupied by Johnson-Hills. About the same time a newcomer from Germany, John Schuette, after a short residence in South Carolina and at Ulav (now Port Washington) made a beginning as a successful merchant on South Eighth and Jay Street. Later his five sons were associated with him in the business. After his death it was continued under the name of Schuette Brothers Company, managed today by his descendants.

Another emigrant from Germany, Henry Esch, included food items with his general merchandising business. The firm of Platt and Vilas and the Goodwin store were pioneer dealers in groceries in pre-Civil War days.

In Two Rivers, the store connected with the early factory enterprise was a pioneer and in later years the Schroeder Brothers Company, with groceries as a part of its business, was founded. This company has continued to this day. There were many other individual food shops there.

As settlers populated the rural areas it became necessary for stores to be established in the little villages and township cen-



Mr. Ralph G. Plumb

ters. The country store then became a reality. Handling a variety of articles that residents in the surrounding community wanted, they served a need at a time when poor roads made the larger communities almost inaccessible. A trip to Manitowoc and Two Rivers was almost in the realm of adventure in those days to people who had resided in the western part of the county. Among names of small general store owners to come to mind were Stangel's at Tisch Mills, Kusterman at St. Nazianz, Maertz at Reedsville, Hessel at Francis Creek, Killen at Cato, Shaffer at Branch, and Watt of Maple Grove.

When the Wisconsin Central Railroad brought into being the villages of Valders, Collins and Quarry, stores were immediately opened at those places, as they had been at Cleveland and Newton when the Milwaukee, Lake-shore and Western Railroad estab-

lished stations at those points.

Prior to 1893 local stores had to rely entirely for supplies on Milwaukee and Chicago. Plumb and Nelson Company had been retailers in Manitowoc since 1873. In 1893 they established the wholesale grocery business that still continues under that name on North 8th Street and between Chicago and Buffalo Streets in Manitowoc. Later there was established the Rappel Company and Quality Fruit. Today there are two other jobbers in groceries, namely Northern Foods and Super Cash and Carry.

An Evolution in Business Methods

Methods of doing business were far and away different from present ones. The successful business today finds advertising imperative. In the early days, advertising as an effort to attract customers was almost nil. When weekly newspapers were started merchants placed a card in the paper, or took small advertising space, more to encourage the continuance of the struggling sheet than to say anything to the public. It generally meant the announcement of the firm name, with the words "General Merchandise" below and possibly the name of the street on which the business was conducted below that phrase.

There was at first a minimum of cash business; in fact, there wasn't much ready cash available. Thus the greater part of the sales were made on a credit or barter basis. Wage earners, paid once a month, were granted the privilege of putting items bought "on the books" until pay day. Farmers brought in their eggs and many of them their home-made butter. This led to the consumer demanding from the grocer the butter made by a particular farmer whose reputation for a superior grade was well known in the town. Larger deals were involved when the farmer brought in his grain after threshing time. In the fall, long lines of teams could be

seen approaching the city with bags of grain and sometimes in the early winter with sled loads of cordwood. Dealers in grain in the 1880's and 1890's used to have a warehouse employee meet these teams at the edge of town to see to it that they went in the right direction. All three department stores had grain warehouses. In many cases the farmer might prefer to get a "due bill" that he could use at the store for groceries and clothing, rather than to take cash for his produce. One grain dealer long maintained a schooner that could transfer the grain to the Milwaukee or Chicago market. This was big business in those days and made up a considerable part of the total volume of business done by these firms.

It is a self-evident fact that in the early days when a person went into business, credit extension by the supplier was a necessity. While some dealers had a goodly sum with which to start their business, there were others for whom credit was an absolute necessity. Before the days of the railroad the supplies came up by boat from Milwaukee or Chicago, and the contact between the food dealer and the wholesaler was infrequent. On occasion the dealer went to the city to buy goods, and that was about the extent of contact. Later when the railroad was built, the jobber made it a rule to have a sales agent call on the trade. Now the practice was for the salesman to act as a collector. The methods of keeping the retailer's books were varied. The general stores of a larger size sometimes pasted the paid invoices in a large-sized ledger. Several of these are on display at The Rahr Civic Center Museum. The small dealer usually stuck the invoices on a spindle and pulled them off for payment when the agent came in.

Changes in Food Merchandising Methods

Most marked of the changes in business methods was that of the

change made in food merchandising methods. Of greatest significance was that of the character of the goods offered by the grocer or general store keeper. The days of food packaging were still far in the future. Almost everything came in bulk. In the back room or cellar were the barrels for vinegar, syrup, molasses, and similar products. Usually outside the side door were the barrels of salt and kerosene. Kerosene, incidentally, was usually delivered by the Standard Oil Company dray. Such staple items as sugar, both granulated and brown, rice, oatmeal and flour came only in 100 pound bags. Coffee, too, was received in 50 pound bags. However, it was not long before the pioneer grocer was able to dispense one pound wax lined bags containing Arbuckle's Ariosa, Woolson's Lion, and McLaughlin's XXXX coffee. The refreshing aroma made by the big coffee mill with its big wheels permeated the store. Of course, many customers preferred to grind their purchases in the little coffee mills at home.

Before the Civil War when there was no excise tax on liquor the general store usually had a keg or barrel of whiskey in stock. It was the custom to give a customer who had paid his bill in full a free little nip in the small dipper which hung over the barrel on a hook.

Earlier food dealers had barrels of salt pork for sale. Within a short time, however, it became a custom to leave the meat business to the butcher, who usually reciprocated by refusing to deal in grocery items. In fact, that was a policy that was steadily maintained in Manitowoc until recent years. The names of Seeger, Pitz, Kadow and Kautsky among many others, stand out as pioneer purveyors of fresh meats, hams and sausages.

Crackers and cookies were sold out of barrels or boxes, and candies out of bulk containers

aside from the wide variety of penny goods. As to fruit and vegetables, reliance was placed on home production. Thus, in the berry season, strawberries, raspberries, currants, blueberries, and other home-grown products were available. None of these were in cans, nor were the vegetables tinned until the packing of peas began in the 80's. Incidentally, the Lakeside Packing Company of Manitowoc was the pioneer in the packing of peas in tin cans. Potatoes, dried beans and peas, of course, were year around items. Most other vegetables, however, were left to the housewife to bottle or preserve in some way. There was opportunity to bring up such delicacies as oranges and lemons by boat, or later by rail, but otherwise the buying public was strictly limited to home-grown products.

Tobacco has always been a staple item on the list of groceries, even from the first settlement. This was before the days of merger and the dealer had to look to many different sources for the brands desired. Fortunately, Milwaukee was the home of two of the leading tobacco manufacturers, the F. F. Adams Tobacco Company with their Standard and Peerless brands, and the Leidersdorf Company with their Nigger Hair brand, now known as Bigger Hair. The wholesaler in Chicago or Milwaukee had to turn elsewhere for the plug tobacco and chewing tobacco he needed to fill the orders that were to go to Manitowoc and other communities. Sorg's Spearhead, for example, came from Ohio. For snuff, the wholesaler had to order from eastern manufacturers. One item found in every grocery store today, cigarettes, was looked at with disfavor. It was not an item that a respectable food dealer wanted to handle. In fact, there wasn't much to choose from, only the domestically produced Sweet Caporals and a few imported Turkish brands.

This about completes the list of staple items a pioneer grocer carried in stock. These he sold to his customers for cash, credit

or barter, and thus served this community as an important contributor to its economic life.

A DELIVERY BOY TELLS HIS STORY ABOUT EMPLOYMENT IN A GROCERY STORE IN THE GAY 90'S

as told to EDWARD EHLERT

It was on April 17, 1891, that I began my work as a delivery boy in a general store. I was then nearly eighteen years old.

Since many of the customers were of German ancestry the ability to speak German was one of the qualifications for the job. Also, there was the need to take care of horses and to drive them. Since I had been born and raised on a farm and was able to speak German, it seemed that I had the qualifications that the proprietor of the store required. I had attended the country school until I was fourteen years of age. Skill in simple arithmetic was also a qualification, and I had this prerequisite skill, too.

The Duties Were Varied

The store hours were from seven o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, six days a week and also on Sunday forenoon. I was paid twenty dollars a month plus room and board for my services. The room in which I slept was above the grocery store. In my second year of employment I was given a five dollar a month increase in salary.

The stable, which was near the store, required attention several times a day, for the two horses needed to be groomed, watered and fed. Then there were the harnesses to keep in good repair and the delivery wagon to keep in serviceable condition. Incidentally, there was also a cow that was kept in the stable, but it was the duty of the hired girl to do the milking.

Most Groceries Purchased in Bulk Packages

My special domain a good deal

of each day was the flour and feed store in the rear of the store. Flour came in 50 and 100 pound bags, as did also the feed for poultry and livestock. This was before the day of the commercial varieties of ground livestock food, so the feed consisted chiefly of shelled corn, oats, rye, and barley. Most of these products were brought in from the farms in the rural areas about the city, and many of these were delivered in payment of products purchased from the store. Eggs and butter were taken in trade for groceries and other merchandise. This was before the day when eggs were candled and graded. The butter was taken to the basement where it was stored in a tub containing salt brine. It was my duty to go to the basement each morning to put the butter into a round one pound butter print, and to package it. It was then taken to the counter upstairs and placed under a glass container to await sale.

The town dray line usually brought to the store merchandise that had been ordered. Most groceries came in bulk, vinegar came in barrels, as did kerosene. Sugar, oatmeal and prunes each came in 100-pound bags. Crackers came in boxes. It was my duty to transfer such products as sugar, oatmeal, prunes, etc., from the sacks in which they came to paper bags containing 5 pounds, 10 pounds or 25 pounds of the product.

Getting Ready For Making Deliveries

The early hours of each morning were spent in getting the

orders ready for delivery. These were put into boxes and loaded on the delivery wagon. Usually only one horse was hitched to the wagon for the loads were not heavy. In those days there was usually a hitching post in front of each home somewhere. There were no such things as curbs and gutters except in the main street which was paved with paving brick. A rope was carried in the delivery wagon at the end of which was a heavy iron weight. This rope was fastened to the bit in the horses' mouth and was supposed to keep the horse from moving away while a delivery was being made. While the horses that we had were usually quite willing to stand quietly to await my return, there were several occasions when for some reason or other they became scared and ran away. The iron weight was supposed to discourage running away; however, a scared horse sometimes will not be restrained no matter what may be in the way. On one occasion the iron weight struck the hoof of the horse with such vigor and violence that the attention of a veterinarian was required. The horse was out of service for a number of weeks while the wounds incurred in the "run-away" healed.

Making The Delivery of Groceries to Homes

When the groceries were delivered to the kitchen of a home, the order was taken for the next delivery. While the telephone had been invented years before, it was not in general use. Some customers came to the store to place their orders for the next delivery.

There were people of Polish ancestry in the town, as well as those of Irish and Bohemian descent. Some of these could communicate in their native language only. To secure the next order from such people was often quite difficult. It usually was done by going to the pantry to look at

the items in stock. As it seemed that a supply was low, by means of pointing on my part, and a nodding of the head by the housewife, that item was placed on the list for delivery on the next trip. After several experiences of this kind, one became rather skilled in getting the message across, and communication was possible even with those who knew only a foreign language.

Coffee in those days was usually of one of two varieties, namely Arbuckle and McLaughlin's 4X coffee. Most people had a coffee grinder in their kitchen. However, there were always some who preferred to have the coffee

ground at the store.

Most work around the store was done by the regular grocery clerk, a young man who came from the same neighborhood which was my boyhood home. He was responsible for sweeping the floor in the morning, keeping the store heated, lamps filled with kerosene and chimneys cleaned. However, during some hours of the day I helped wait on trade and to help with packaging of merchandise.

After two and one half years as a delivery boy, I quit to take employment in a shingle and lath mill nearer by boyhood home.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF A COUNTRY STOREKEEPER

as told by MRS. MONICA WAGNER

TO MR. EDWARD EHLERT

One of the prominent merchandisers in the rural area of Manitowoc County was J. C. Kusterman who took over a general store in St. Nazianz in 1880. The business was purchased from a Mr. Leidl, who had come from Barton, Wisconsin, to found this business. When he sold the business to my father he returned to Barton. This was the only store in a radius of eighteen miles. In addition to being a source for whatever groceries, clothing and dry goods the pioneer settler required, a tin shop was also an adjunct of the business. There was also a complete line of hardware, including gun powder, shot, hand tools and implements.

Settlers in those days had little in the way of cash, so barter was a common means of doing business. The products that were bartered were many and varied. They ranged from butter, eggs,



Mrs. Monica Wagner, 1967

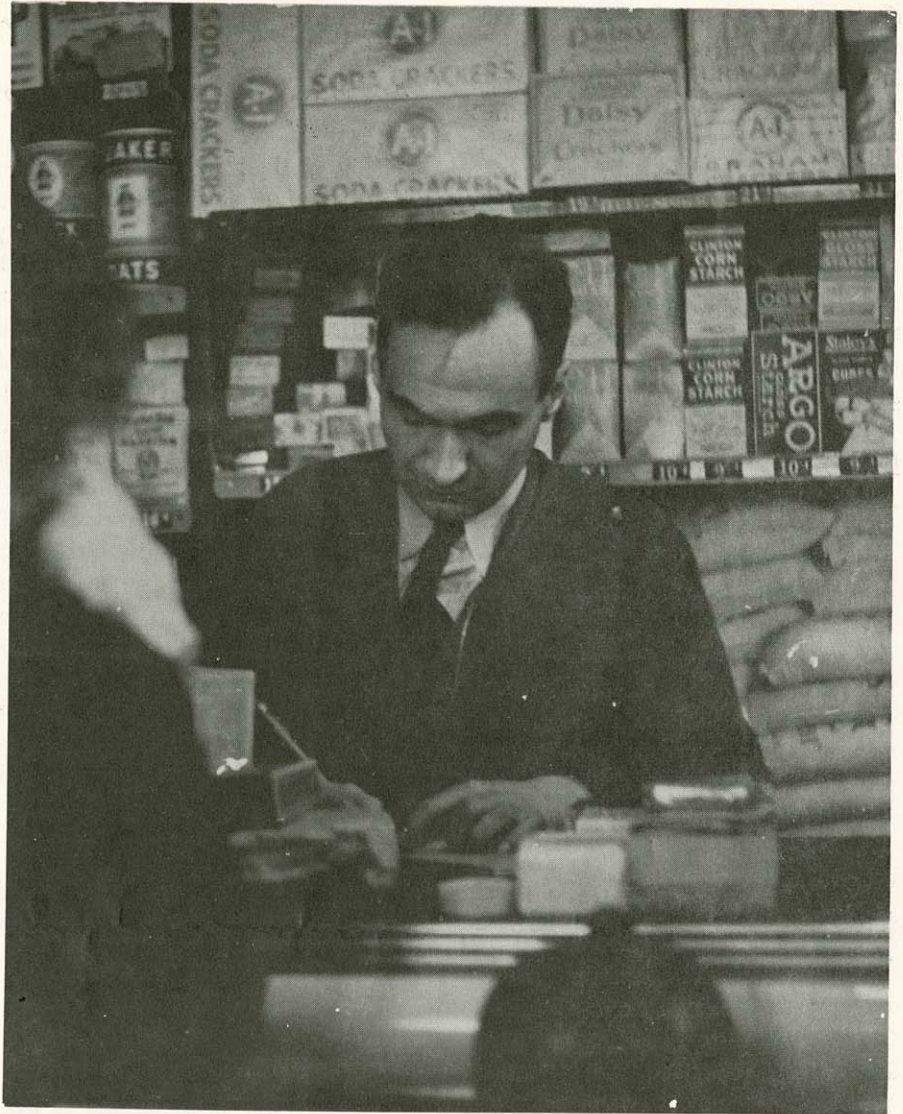
cheese, grain, corn, fire wood and the pelts of domestic and fur bearing animals. Domestic animals in which the hides were common items of barter were calves, cattle, dogs and horses.

Travel in those days was difficult, thus people did not go to the store any more often than was necessary. When they did go to the store, they tried to anticipate their needs for at least

a week or two. Often the man and wife both came to town. In that case the wife often did the shopping while the man went across the street to the "Northwestern House" to exchange gossip with the men who might have gathered there, and also to do a bit of "nipping." The country store of that period was a place for "whittling and spitting" and our store was no exception in this regard. There were benches around the stove at the rear of the store, and these were usually occupied a good deal of the day. It was there that there was an exchange of gossip about the happenings in the community and the world. It was there also that those in the neighborhood gathered to spend the hours before bed time at night. The store was opened at 7:00 o'clock in the morning and remained open until the last person left at night, which was usually around 10 o'clock. The store was open on Sunday until 3:00 P.M.

In those days everything came in bulk. Molasses came in barrels. It was the only source of sweets that the pioneers had. Likewise sugar came in barrels, with each barrel weighing about 350 pounds. The grocer packaged sugar in sacks containing about 22 pounds which sold for a dollar. Salt was another product that came in barrels which weighed 280 pounds. These sold for \$1.05. Every winter my father ordered a carload of salt which was shipped to Kiel, or was sent by boat to Manitowoc. Many settlers bought a barrel of salt at a time, for it was one of the basic items in food preservation, as well as serving as food for livestock. Such staple items as oatmeal and rice came in bulk. Flour came in 50 or 100 pound sacks. It sold for 79¢, 90¢, and \$1.05, depending on the brand name. It was not at all unusual that a settler would walk to town for a sack of flour and then carry it home on his shoulder.

Kerosene was an item that was



Mr. Gust Kusterman, son of J. C. Kusterman, waiting on customer in Kusterman's Store 1935

delivered by a horse-drawn tank wagon from Northwestern Oil Company or the Union Oil Company in Manitowoc. It was stored in a tank which we had at the rear of the store. Two turns of the crank measured a gallon of kerosene.

When the first gasoline engines and automobiles made their appearance, the only source for fuel was at our store.

Then there were barrels of linseed oil and turpentine, two products used in the preparation of paint. There was also red and yellow ocher and lamp black which was used as a coloring for paint. Cod liver oil was another product that came in barrel lots. Pioneers purchased this in liberal

quantities as a household remedy for the ills that might afflict the family. Cookies and crackers came in boxes, while candy came in pails.

Merchandise Sent By Boat To Manitowoc

St. Nazianz has never had a railroad. The nearest stations were at Collins and Valders; however, the Soo Line railroad was not built until later. Thus, the merchandise that was ordered from Roundy, Peckham, and Dexter of Milwaukee was shipped by boat to Manitowoc. My father had a Conestoga wagon which he used to get the merchandise from Manitowoc. One trip was made each week. He began the trip at

two o'clock in the morning, for the roads were poor, and so travel was slow. Since the wagon was heavily loaded on the return trip, my father seldom arrived home before 9 or 10 o'clock at night. Later there was a dray line in the village operated by Andrew Heisdorf who then made these weekly trips to Manitowoc (and later also to Kiel) to get the merchandise. My father was meticulous in his bookkeeping and the ledgers show that from \$2.00 to \$2.50 was paid per trip. When the Plumb and Nelson Company opened their wholesale store in Manitowoc the groceries were purchased from that company.

The day books kept by my father contain the following information concerning shipping of eggs to the cities:

Shipping by boat from Manitowoc —
 To Milwaukee 30½¢ cwt.
 To Chicago 49½¢ cwt.

Return of empty crates
 Milwaukee 20½¢ cwt.
 Chicago 28 ¢ cwt.

Great Variety of Merchandise Available at Store

Just about every need of the settler could be purchased at my father's store. There was always great demand for stone crocks in 2 gallon to 20 gallon sizes. These came from a company in Red Wing, Minnesota. (This company still is in existence today; however, it now features chinaware.) The stone crocks were used for the preservation of food products, such as salt pork and sauerkraut, and also for the storage of butter. Gunpowder, shot of all sizes (buckshot was the largest size), and all the other things needed to load a musket were items that were always stocked. There were also certain items of hardware such as nails, screws, and hand tools such as rakes, hoes, axes, shovels, as well as the common carpenter's tools. Just about any article of clothing that could be gotten was available. A popular item of

clothing was a fur coat. Both men and women wore them; however, the styles were different.

Accounts of Transactions Kept in Ledger

The ledger which my father kept is a most interesting book. In it he wrote the details of every transaction. The credits which were often in the form of farm products were shown as well as the items that were purchased and their prices. The records were written in ink. Both red and black ink was used. The handwriting was of excellent quality. There were also "day books" in which the individual transactions were written. These were then transferred to ledgers containing debits and credits of each account. Several transactions chosen at random will be given here to indicate prices that were paid, and the items that were purchased.

Matt Ruplinger

Credit for hides \$2.27
 Dress goods76
 Seed meal 1.00
 1.76
 Paid cash51

Matt Schuler

Credit for eggs35
 for cheese 6.07
 for wood 1.00
 \$7.42

Bought 20 yds. sheeting 1.60
 4 yds. vailaing 1.20
 9 yds. ticking 1.62
 4.42

Mrs. Germain

1 hat 1.50
 1 "Kalendar"17
 (likely this was the Farmer's Almanac.)
 5 yds. sheeting70
 4 jars44
 (stone crocks for food preservation and storage)

Wendel Christel

18 yds. calico 1.80
 1 head shawl 1.00
 1 doz. buttons06
 spool thread04
 2 balls cotton14
 4 darning needles02
 1 ax handle15
 horse powder50
 *Coffee Essens05
 Yeast05
 *Note: Coffee Essens was a substance like chicory which was used to darken coffee.

Dick Hougen

1 pair wooden shoes38
 thread 5, Saleratus 510
 turpentine 8, lamp black 5 .13
 raisins 14, mixed candy 12 .26
 lamp chimney 8, nuts 19 .27
 2 lbs. nails @ 2¢04

1.18

Thorsten Erickson

3 yds. sheeting27
 ribbon15
 1½ yds. sheeting14
 Coffin studs12
 2 pair coffin handles40
 screws 4, glue 610
 2 spools thread @ 5¢10
 stockings14
 3 lbs. sugar23
 Ivory soap10

Credit by cash45

2 yds. pique30
 5 yds. sheeting @ 9¢45
 1½ yds. ribbons @ 8¢12
 thread05
 3 doz. coffin studs34
 2 pair coffin handles 1.20
 broom30
 ½ lb. flounders20
 tacks04
 Camphor08
 4 lbs. sugar @ 7½¢30
 3 lbs. coffee @ 16¢48
 yeast08
 4 lbs. prunes and dried apples24

5.93

By cash 1.08

Forwarded to ledger 4.40

Patent Medicines Kept in Stock

Important to the life of the early settlers was the stock of patent medicines which the merchant had on his shelves. Every known medicine was purchased for sale to the customers. Since a doctor often was miles away and was not called except as a last resort, people came to the store to seek a remedy for the ills of the family. My mother had gone to high school and was a graduate of Notre Dame in Milwaukee which was quite the exception as to the level of education in those days. She was also the teacher in the grade school before her marriage. Thus she was looked upon as one of the best educated persons in the community and her counsel and suggestion was sought by many as they looked for medicines to cure their many ills. An uncle in the

family was a doctor, and often my mother would get suggestions from him which she could pass on to customers. Earlier mention was made that cod liver oil was bought in barrel lots. This was one of the standard remedies that were sold. Flax seed and mustard seed were used as poultices for rheumatic pains and colds. Bitters, poke root compound, and ginseng were used to relieve stomach distress.

Merchant Anticipates Demands and Needs of Customers

The people in the St. Nazianz trading area at the time were of German, Norwegian, Irish and Polish ancestry. Each nationality had its preferences in the way of merchandise. For example, the German people liked to stock up on herring for the winter months. These came in kegs, usually of about ten pound size. The Norwegians wanted lutefisk and similar products. Of course, smoked fish was in great demand too.

My father always bought green coffee which he had roasted in the big stone oven at the local bakery. Peanuts were also roasted there. Maple syrup was shipped from Vermont in wash tubs. The syrup was then cooked until it became sugary. It was then cut into squares and sold. This was a favorite item in the summer, for sweets of any kind were rarities, and real delicacies.

During the berry season, such things as strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries were common articles that were brought in. The supply of these often exceeded the demand by a considerable margin, and since these products were perishable, often at the close of the day there was a canning bee in the kitchen. My mother, of course, sometimes was not too happy with this development, but with a large family of children around these were delicacies that were favorites during the winter season.

Some Unusual Incidents Occur

Since my father went into business in St. Nazianz in 1880, Indians were not regular visitors to the store. They had years before settled on the Indian reservation at Keshena. However, there were still stragglers who lived on the east shore of Lake Winnebago. My mother tells of an incident in which while she was alone in the store an Indian squaw walked in. She knew no English, but pointed at a cat which was asleep near the stove. My mother sensed that she wished her to give her the cat, so she told her to take it. The squaw then walked out of the store with the cat. My mother breathed a sigh of relief that she was able to be rid of this "customer" so easily.

There were occasional threats of Indian uprisings. When these rumors reached a settler, the family would retire to a "sub-basement" which was referred to as an "Indian keller" because of its use in time of threatened danger.

Another story is told of a man who carried twelve dozen eggs in a basket on his shoulder. He walked a distance of four miles on a warm summer day. Arriving at the store he stumbled and fell with the basket of eggs, and broke all but one egg. He promptly arose, clutching the one egg and with force threw this egg to the floor saying as he did, "Nun ja geh doch |du noch zu teufel." Translated this means, "You can go to the devil too."

My Father Takes Inventory of Merchandise

One of the record books which the family still has is one in which the inventory was written of merchandise in the store at the end of a year. The items were listed together with their prices. There must have been eight or ten pages of items that were listed. However, there were items such as "drugs and medicines" and "groceries" which very obviously represented all the items in a "department." Because of the interest that there may be in some of the prices we chose at random ten of the items inventoried. These follow:

15 corsets	\$11.25
21 suspenders	2.20
2 pair silk gloves96
60 balls cotton	1.80
1½ doz. socks	3.43
5 doz. thimbles	1.75
men's socks	15.23
11 fancy dress hoops66
3 doz. crochet hooks	1.20
39 pair shoes	78.00

Merchants Rendered An Important Service in Pioneer Community

My father was about twenty-six years of age when he took over the store in St. Nazianz. He finally sold the store to my brother who operated it until his death about eight years ago. Thus, the name "Kusterman" was a St. Nazianz by-word for about three quarters of a century. The store has now passed into other hands.

Conditions under which a mercantile establishment is operated today, of course, are quite dif-



Kusterman's Store in 1941

ferent than in the days of the early settlers. It is easy for people to travel to the larger cities, thus they are no longer as dependent on the country store for their needs as they once were. Life was simple in the pioneer settlement and the country store keeper was one of the most important men in the community. He brought to people some of the necessities and conveniences for comfortable living in a rural area. The effects of the Industrial Revolution were felt in the cities early; however, in the rural areas

the products of an industrial society were slower in reaching there, and it was only because of the small town merchant that they were available at all. Surely life was made more tolerable as a result of the willingness of men like my father and the many others who gave service to people in other communities. Life wasn't easy for the pioneer settler, nor was it easy for men like my father who gave service to his neighbors for many miles around. Together these pioneers shared in the joys and sorrows of living in

an age which was quite different from what we know today. Because there were people who were willing to make personal sacrifice and who were content with small incomes following long hours of hard work, our America has become the great country that it has become. While few may need to sacrifice as did these pioneers it is hoped that the determination will ever remain that this shall always be a country where men can be free to pursue occupation suited to their ambitions and talents.

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