5-1968

Peddling in Northern Utah as Compared to the Continental United States

Paul J. Nye
Utah State University

PEDDLING IN NORTHERN UTAH AS COMPARED TO THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

by

Paul J. Nye

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1968

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. S. George Ellsworth, who suggested this work and gave encouragement and guidance. Also to Miss Lucile Pratt, Dr. Stanford Cazier and Professor Evan Murray who were members of my committee.

I want to express my appreciation to the History Department at Utah State University, a finer, higher calibre of men and women are not found. I thank them for the close relationship, their tireless efforts, and the friendship which I treasure.

I give thanks to my sweet and patient wife, who never let me down once. Also to my boys, who at times missed a complete meal, but never whined.

Paul J. Nye

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Peddling in Northern Utah as Compared

To the Continental United States

by

Paul J. Nye, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1968

Major Professor: Dr. S. George Ellsworth
Department: History

Oral interviews were conducted in Cache Valley pertaining to the goods and services performed by the itinerant peddler as compared with peddling in the continental United States.

Having a large inland lake such as Bear Lake brought about the peddling of fish, similar to that done on the seaboard.

The availability of goods and services rendered by the itinerant in Utah was similar to the goods and services obtainable from earlier United States peddlers.

(143 pages)

PART I

PEDDLING IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To many, a difficult part of a Master's Thesis is selecting a topic. Peddling in Northern Utah was suggested, and received with interest. After consulting with Dr. S. George Ellsworth, the conclusion was made that most of Utah's History on peddlers would come from oral interviews.

Chapters II and III of Part I, deal with the original Yankee Peddler, the life he lived and the goods he sold. Chapter IV deals with the Jewish Peddler and his entrance onto the peddling scene.

With this background on U. S. peddlers, Chapter V, Part II, deals with the itinerants of Utah, both local and those who crossed the territory and state.

The greater part of the Utah chapter was obtained by personal interviews with elderly people who themselves peddled or who knew of the peddlers. These older citizens of a community were searched out. They were asked if they remembered the peddler who passed through their home town years ago. If their knowledge was small, a few notes were taken and referrals were asked for. If they recalled many experiences pertaining to the peddlers or if they themselves had peddled, a future visit was arranged and a tape recorder taken.

These older people were very congenial and willing to help. Many times they wandered off the subject. If a wife or husband had recently passed away, the interview was much more difficult. Family albums were

brought out and life histories were told. Not a few tears were shed during the interview if a loved one had recently passed on. But the elderly people enjoyed the visits and the company it afforded them.

A suggestion might be made here. Young Historians would profit greatly by spending a few afternoons with some of the older persons in a community. The social and historical information acquired would be of value.

Consideration was given to two modes of writing: topical or chronological order. The topical order will be used in this thesis.

The peddlers who worked Northern Utah can be classified into three main groups: (1) local persons who peddled locally (which was mainly food products), (2) those itinerants who came in from Ogden or Salt Lake City (these sold manufactured goods and performed many of the services such as the Dentist, or Eye Doctor), and (3) those who were not Utahns (who came in on the train, covered an area and left. These were from the big cities of the East or from the West Coast).

CHAPTER II

PEDDLING

Most of us today are paid a weekly or bi-monthly salary. Thus once a week or so, the family conveniently drives to the supermarket to do the shopping. It does not matter what season of year it is, there are always fresh fruits and vegetables of all kinds. There are rows and rows of coolers with milk, butter, cheese, meats, ice cream and many more fancy wrapped or packaged foods. When an item of clothing is needed or something for the home, they are just as available.

Probably the thought would never have entered the author's mind, had he not written this paper. Where were these goods and services obtained fifty, one hundred or two hundred years ago? Before the music-filled supermarkets evolved or the large department stores came about, where did the inhabitants obtain the necessities and niceties of life? True, there was the country store, or the large city merchantilist, but the mode of travel was about 1/10 the speed of ours today.

This paper deals with the traveling itinerant, those who plied the paths and roads of the past and filled a need for their times. It is the story of the almost forgotten pioneer who delivered tremendous amounts of foods, goods and services to the earlier fathers of our country. Only when one has done a more thorough study on the obtaining of foods, goods and services, does one appreciate our modern conveniences of today. When an individual studies History, quite often the social aspects are to an extent neglected. One studies the big movements and over-all passing of time, but even though the peddler is not as romantic

as an Indian fighter or as famous as a well-known mountain man, he was just as important.

Peddlers have been operating for centuries. They existed throughout the world and still exist in most countries today. Jewish perfume peddlers sold their wares to the ladies of high places while the Christians were being fed to the lions in Roman arenas.

The peddler had status under the feudal system of Europe. He entered kings' palaces and traded with the peasants. He had easy access to the whole range of society.

In England, peddlers of small wares were numerous and for hundreds of years many traversed England and also traded on the continent. They were restricted to the circuit assigned them and licensed by two justices of the peace in their locale. The constant menace were highwaymen and robbers looting their goods.[1]

In New York City, during the middle of the 19th Century, almost any household item available could be purchased directly from the peddlers on the crowded street: whale oil, charcoal, root beer (3¢ a glass), strawberries, beans, peas, cucumbers, cabbages, onions, potatoes, bakery goods, ice, raw oysters (1¢ to 2¢ each), lemons, oranges, and meats. Even then, a butcher received complaints because of the high cost of meat. A twenty-one pound veal was $3.94 and twelve pounds of mutton sold for $1.50.[2]

---

[1] Clara H. Fawcett, "Dollology," Hobbies, LXVIII (December 1963), 40.

[2] Ibid.

Peddling is still done in the U. S. One of the famous streets for peddlers today is Chicago's Maxwell Street. For 78 years it has been a place of "pullers" and pushcart peddlers. These peddlers and vendors pay 17¢ daily for the privilege of selling on Maxwell Street. But because of the needed room for freeways and city expansion, the city receipts from the peddlers are going down. In 1960, the city received $7000 for letting the peddlers sell. In 1962, it was $4500.[1] The street still draws people from miles around. They are mostly older men "trying to make a few dollars." They set up shop at 5:00 A.M. on Sundays and sell anything from rusty hardware to piano rolls and seventy-five year old kerosene lamps.

In the metropolis of Los Angeles, California, the Helms Bakery Company does a tremendous door to door business. Their huge truck fleet and personnel deliver thousands of dollars worth of fresh bakery goods daily to the modern housewife.

Campfire Girls and Girl Scouts sell cookies door to door and raise organization money. Watkins Products, Avon Products, books, vacuum cleaners, insurance, and many other items are peddled door to door.

> In ratio to the total population, our modern tribes of peddlers have decreased. Yet the American Peddler is by no means extinct. Hundreds of thousands still follow the great trade, and tens of thousands still follow it along the open roads.[2]

"Thomas Jefferson once reflected . . . that one third of the American population spent its time peddling goods to the remaining two-thirds."[3]

---

[1]"Everything Under the Sun," Business Week, July 13, 1963, p. 28.

[2]Charles Marrow Wilson, "Road Side Americans," Harper's Monthly, CLXXI, (October, 1935), 632.

[3]Ibid.

The Yankee Peddler

The original American peddler was a New Englander. In fact, the phrase "Damn Yankee" was derived from the New England peddler. There are questions which quickly arise. Why were New Englanders so involved in the itinerant trade? Were there peddlers from the South? Was the New England "sharper" than the Southerner? Did the South manufacture goods which found their way into the peddler's pack?

Several factors shaped the destiny of New England. First, New England is a mountainous, rocky coastal area with a harsh climate. Those who farm, do not farm with the ease which the Southerner's do. The Appalachians in the South are far from the coast. In the South, the land is low, flat and fertile. The soil is tilled with ease and crops thrive in the hot humid climate. The rivers are slow and deep and river boats travel up them for many miles, forming natural highways.

In the North, just the opposite exists. The land is rocky and mountains cover the coast. The streams are swift and unnavigable. The land is covered with brush and timber which must be cleared to utilize the soil. The climate is harsh and calls for a life of vigor to eke out a living. The swift streams provide a great amount of water power. In the past the farms were small and did not demand the land-owner to invest in slaves. Timber and ship building supplies were in abundance. New England turned to building ships and this in turn led to a merchant marine, a merchant class, and a society built around a mercantilistic system, while the South developed farms, plantations and an agrarian society. So to begin, the South became an agricultural area while the North turned more to a merchant type society. With a knowledge of

merchandizing they gradually began turning their face from England to their own shores.

Later the American Revolution brought on severe shortages of manufactured goods from the Mother Country. With this problem, New England turned to her own manufacturing. She, much more than the South, developed home industry before the Revolution. Because of this background, New England turned more easily than did the South, to producing the goods they could no longer obtain. True the South had its household industries--each plantation made its shoes, common clothes and simple necessities--but it made practically no surplus, and its social attitude was not conducive to the rise of a trading class.

Agriculture, along with shipping, fisheries, naval stores, and peltry was the backbone, but household industry was laying the foundation of New England's industrial life. The transition was gradual. Not until the Civil War did the domestic loom give way to the ten thousand spindle factories.

Thus, with a merchant class, home manufacturing and gradually commercial manufacturing, peddling became unique with the North, mainly in New England.

Since manufacturing is a product of demand and the demand was local the first market was in New England. As communications improved and production out-distanced the local market, there sprang up a brisk trade with other colonies. A great deal of this trade was brought about by the peddlers and their door to door and village to village wanderings.

When the sales of products of New England and the middle provinces began to cut into the business of English manufacturers, the first of many acts were passed restricting the manufacture of goods in the North.

These taxations and prohibitions invariably stimulated local manufacture. Coastal blockages, the Revolution, and the War of 1812 sent many home industries into full swing. However, by 1820 the household industries of New England were being overshadowed by the first factories. Another twenty years found them going out completely.

Manufactured goods, home, industrially, and imported, were distributed in two ways: through the retail shops of town merchants and through the itinerant vending of peddlers, reaching even the most outlying settlements. Scarcely a town in New England was not represented on the road by one or more peddlers. Many New England towns had from between ten to forty of its young men out at a time. Many of these youths returned, only to persuade their families and friends to follow them to a new Northwest Territory, a new Mississippi Valley, an Illinois prairie or the vastness of Texas.

The Yankee Peedler dominated the itinerant commercial scene for over 200 years. When the first settlers left the coastal area and moved inland the itinerant carried pins, needles, cookware, and cutlery to them from England, along with fish, oysters, spices and salt and pepper. As New England broadened her goods these also moved westward with the early frontier. The Yankee Peddler followed the narrow paths and streams into the hinter land. He found a vast market for much of his trade in the South because of her lack of home industry. By 1676 he had such a monopoly in the Carolinas that a restrictive law was aimed at him.[1] It was not until the 1840's that he began to leave the peddling scene.

---

[1]Richardson Wright, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1927), 40.

In the late 1840's the German Jew flooded the Northeastern shores and many turned to the peddling trade. From the 1840's on, he dominated the peddling scene. These flooded over into the Deep South and far out to the Western Frontier. Again in the 1880's the Eastern European Jews arrived to the land of opportunity and the over-flow valve was peddling.

As mentioned earlier the first peddlers were the Yankees from New England. They were young men; young men capable of taking care of themselves. They covered large stretches of frontier--solitary stretches which separated town from town. They tracked through wilderness, kept a safe distance from wild beasts and made friends with the wild redman. "To venture a peddling journey from Connecticut to Georgia would excite more comment, fear and local wonder than a journey to Tibet would today."[1]

As a rule most peddlers tried to reach a home as close to the time of an evening meal as possible. Often they traded a small item for their food and lodging. If they were not invited in or the house was too small to accommodate them, they slept in the barn or out-building.

Not all slept in barns, or stayed at private homes. In Hartford, Connecticut there's a document that bears the title: Arrival and Departure of Pedlars of the Pedlars' and Yankees' Log Book. It lists the itinerants who put up at a tavern in Hartford between August 1, 1820 and March 4, 1821. One hundred and forty-seven peddlers patronized the Inn during that time.[2]

But often if he were at a farmhouse, the smell of roasting meat and a sly remark usually brought him to a hearty meal. Many traveled the

---

[1] Wright, 21.

[2] Ibid., 24.

same paths year after year, building up a route where they knew they would obtain food and lodging. And one should keep in mind that this type of route kept the peddler honest.

His life was not one of ease and comfort: traversing mountains and rivers, plodding along on dust-filled paths or roads, sleeping in the rain or cold, packing and unpacking and being a lonesome traveler much of the time. Many of these experiences he shared with the family when invited in for food, lodging or both.

Most of the time the early peddler was working in a seller's market. He was selling to a people who were eager to add the slightest luxuries to their meager possessions. Backwoods settlers found it hard to resist some small nicety or toy. By early March the out of the way families were on the lookout for the man with his pack on his back or a wagon filled with the luxuries and treasures of the world. No doubt then, like today, the family made a list of things they were in need of so when the itinerant came through they would not forget the dozen buttons, some needles, a tin pan, jackknife or some other item they wanted.

The itinerant would drive up to a house and address the lady in some such manner. "Madam are you in need of any pocket sawmills? Horngun flints? Basswood hams? Wooden nutmegs? White oak cheeses? Tin bungholes? Calico hog trough?"[1] Hopefully gaining a smile from the lady he proceeded to explain what he really had: Tinware, mats, glassware, brooms, washboards, clothespins, rolling pins, paddy irons, and kettles.

---

[1]Wright, 22.

Most everywhere he called, he was a welcome visitor. Housewives stopped their work, chores were ceased, and if the men were close, they came in from the fields. People gathered around. Slowly he laid out his stock. If he had a wagon he opened the doors which protected his goods from the weather. Should he be a trunk peddler, he opened his trunks and displayed his goods. Maybe only a ten cent sale was made. Then he slowly packed again. Pins were slipped inside a larger item, combs and buttons were packed in hollow containers, small items placed in larger, until the largest were packed in the trunk and covered. He hoisted them on his back and headed for the next house. However, if it was close to mealtime he was in no hurry to leave.

The packs were of two main types: one, a tin foot-locker type affair, and the other a sack made from a strong material called "ticking." When it rained the cloth sacks were covered with an oil cloth. Later leather packs were used and even later they were tied to the backs of horses. Many times, oddly enough, the more he sold the heavier his pack became. He picked up grain, furs, honey or homemade items which he exchanged for his wares. These had to be carried back to his home-base and traded for money or a new supply. This second aspect of his trading also greatly determined his final profit.

The question may be asked, how did he ever make it pay? As a general rule they did not get rich. Some worked up to a wagon, then to a building and some eventually gained their wealth in that manner. The peddler did not need much money. He ate and slept as cheaply as possible. If the trunk was worth $20 and he sold that much for 200 percent in a two week period, he was making good wages for those days. Remember he

slept in barns or was invited to spend the night. Hearty meals were very inexpensive or even free. His overhead was low, his mark-up high, and even small wages in early times were good.

He carried news, good and bad! He carried gossip, scandal and stories. Oh, the stories he could tell! The experiences he had! He knew which areas were filling up with civilization. He knew which were still unsettled. He knew the best route to travel, the best ford. He knew the Indian trails, the best roads, the worst ones. Often he helped a family locate a sister, brother, son or daughter. He kept the isolated country folk in touch with their young country. He brought the news of war, of peace, of elections and defeats. He could tell the news for miles around: what happened on the ridge or down in the valley. He acted as newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and moving pictures. He entertained not only with stories but with song, dance or musical instrument. He surveyed the possibilities of various regions and upon returning home reported his findings. He was a scout for that great migration westward and southward of the hardy New England stock.

As the years passed, the type of man who took to peddling changed considerably. From reckless, young fellows of the beginning (youths capable of finding their own way and taking care of themselves in the wilderness), peddling slipped into the hands of older men as the roads became safer and the wilderness less fearsome.

"Going Peddling" was an opportunity! There were many reasons for peddling and one was that it was an opportunity. The experience needed could be learned in a few rounds. For as little as $20 to $30 in cash one could buy enough stock and be in business. The market was expanding across the nation. After a few years many left the profession and set

themselves up in a more settled business. Many a merchant began his career packing a miniature store on his back or having one contained in the back of his wagon. Some of our great department and chain stores had their beginning in just such a manner.

Where there was a town merchant, the peddler was his biggest competitor, but in some areas the peddler took on a wholesale function. Many merchants made an annual or semi-annual stock buying trip to the big city. At times in between, his stock ran low and if boat or train facilities didn't restock his supplies, he forfeited some sales. This is where the wholesale peddler came in. Henry W. Carter of Vermont did a huge business with his teams and wagons, shipping goods to out of the way merchants. Mr. Carter's activities fell under this title because he peddled directly to the merchant. He did not have orders to fill but took a chance on unloading his merchandise much the same way an itinerant did. This peddling to established merchants was very profitable. It is recorded that one of Carter's many big teams and wagons disposed of $11,000 worth of watches in seven weeks.[1] At the close of summer these large wagons headed back to the big warehouses for restocking.

Wherever migration took place, the traveling itinerant followed at its heels. Whether to the Appalachians, the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, the Northwest Territory, Deep South, California, Oregon or Mormon Trails, peddlers took advantage of the new markets. In many instances, pedding was the means of supporting migrating settlers to new homes. Both young and old, these peddlers played an unforgettable role in widening our

---

[1]Wright, 85.

frontiers and were the first strains of the commercial move westward.

In the beginning he was one of the few but major means for distributing manufactured goods. The era called for that type of distribution because of poor postal service, homes miles apart, distant frontiers meagerly settled, and poor transportation. With these lacking, the itinerant fit in very well. It was his services which caused many a manufacturing concern to begin, grow and become a big business. For years the peddler was the direct go between, between the manufacturer and the buyer. He was the middleman. Often in the early manufacturing history of the U. S. he carried new ideas and suggestions for improvement for an article from the purchaser back to the buyer. The Stanley Tool and Hardware Company got many ideas in this manner.

As mentioned, many of our well-known department stores in various sections of our country were established by the peddler. These were mainly of Jewish descent. These were the Jews who migrated from Russia and Poland in the 1880's. Many were local vendors rather than those who spent weeks and months on the open road like the early peddlers and the German Jew. The German Jew hit the road while the Polish and Russian Jew became a push-cart peddler and later a merchant in his own area.[1] The peddling shifted from the Yankee to the Jew, but for years and even today goods are still manufactured by many companies founded years ago and fostered by peddling. The peddling school of "hard knocks" trained many for different kinds of businesses later. There were no business colleges or schools of business. Today college is usually the background

---

[1] Wright, 92.

for our businessmen but in years past the school of the open road trained many.

"The peddler's salesmanship and physical endurance kept alive the first stirrings of our industrial economy. He has gone now, but for two hundred years he was an important man among men engaged in important affairs."[1]

Except for a few dishonest peddlers they served a very useful purpose. Importers and manufacturers depended upon him as an outlet for a large portion of their goods. Several million people relied on these wandering merchants to bring them the goods they were in such need of and to carry off their excess. This army of peddlers was a primitive but effective way of early business.

Pioneer settlers in many a new area were interested only in the bare necessities of life and existence. Only when these are met does one think about other goods and luxuries. This is where the itinerant came in. Many necessities, goods, and services just above the bare necessities were brought in by this lonely traveler. Combs, buttons, jewelry, pins, shoelaces, Jew's Harps, knives, woodenware, piece goods and books are only a few of the items distributed by the itinerant merchant and empire builder of the past. Later carpet slippers, razors, snuff-boxes, tobacco, spectacles, and hair and clothes brushes appeared. By 1830 the stock grew so large that many were forced to take to wagons, actually becoming miniature department stores on the road.

As the young nation grew so also did the number of peddlers who took to the road. Around 1830 Meriden, Connecticut had no less than forty

---

[1]Penrose Scull, "Pack-Road to Yesterday," American Heritage, VII (April, 1956), 60.

peddlers out at one time and Hartford (of the same state) had as many as sixty.[1] One authority states that in 1850 there were 10,669 peddlers in the field. By 1860 they were estimated to number almost 17,000.[2] Another authority claims that in 1860 there were 16,594 peddlers in the United States.[3] Between 1850 and 1920 a quarter of a million Jewish men alone had been peddlers.[4]

Naturally as the number of peddlers grew, legislation and laws against him arose. Here the itinerant met with opposition. Connecticut merchantmen claimed they paid taxes and peddlers should be expected to do the same. Many merchants tried their best to keep itinerants out of their area. This was done by a local tax, fee, or outright legislation against them. It seems that the pressure against the peddler was constant. As far back as 1717 Connecticut placed a twenty schilling fee on all goods peddled in that town.[5] New York State in 1841 issued 302 peddlers' licenses. Of these 227 went to trunk peddlers at $20 each and 71 went to horseback peddlers. The latter were charged a little more but how much more is not known.[6] At times a bond was even required besides the license.

---

[1]J. R. Dolan, The Yankee Peddlers of Early America (New York: Bramhall House, 1964), 73.

[2]Ibid., 231.

[3]Fred M. Jones, "Peddlers," Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons), IV, 238.

[4]Harry Golden, Forgotten Pioneer (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963), 20.

[5]Wright, 89.

[6]Dolan, 232.

This kept the itinerant on good honest behavior.

> A story is told of one peddler who duly secured his license but did not have it displayed. Sensing a possible shakedown or at least some fun at the expense of the peddler, a local constable approached him just as he arrived at the tavern, bargained with him for several minutes for a barlow knife and finally paid him a dollar for it. He then demanded that the peddler produce his license, never dreaming the man had one. Of course the peddler whipped out the license and we can imagine the face of the law. But now the constable was poorer by $1.00 and the owner of a knife he did not want. So, after somewhat recovering from his embarrassment he offered to sell it back to the peddler for half a dollar. This the gentleman of the road promptly accepted. Thus at that moment the peddler was fifty cents ahead on the whole transaction. But not satisfied with that he made further demands on the law officer because he, the constable, was selling goods without a license.[1]

States and provinces alike passed laws against the peddler and many town merchants supported them. But of the research work done it does not really seem to have been a great burden to the peddler. If the person was a local vendor he purchased his license and it lasted him as long as the local merchant's license. If he were a traveler he hit mostly small towns and sparsely settled areas. Often he hit a town and was quickly on his way. It seems that many town ordinances were not enforced.

The peddler served an area and during a period of time which was unique. Transportation was very slow compared with present standards. Communication was by slow post riders or word of mouth. Food preservation, packaging and mass transportation were yet to be born. It was a time for peddlers. It was probably the only way commercial activity could endure, other than the farmer-to-market method.

---

[1]Dolan, 232-233.

Along with the cry of the farmers was the cry of the peddler for better roads. Better roads meant more and larger wagons. Larger wagons meant more goods being taken farther inland. The expanding markets meant greater volume in manufacturing. With better roads more people went West. As people moved West, towns sprang up, stores took the peddler's business, except in the more out of the way places. With this, the peddlers moved still farther West and opened up more trails and roads.

In the late 1700's shortly after the birth of our nation, both the government and private companies began road building. In the South large slow running rivers were utilized but in the North the rivers were too swift and it was just a short distance to the fall line. So road development began earlier in the North. Private companies sprang up over night, selling stock for a new section of a national road. Stock holders were payed handsome dividends. It might be of interest here to know where the word turnpike comes from and how our expressways were named that. A post was placed on each side of the road. A long cross-arm was attached so it swung over the road from each post and touched near the middle of the road. A large pike (or spike) was placed in the end of the cross-arm making a fairly formidable blockade. Only when the fee was paid was the pike turned out of the way to let the team and wagon pass. Thus the word turnpike.

Gradually canals were constructed. Large amounts of goods were floated inland. Mule-pulled barges gave way to river steamers. Dusty, rough roads gradually gave way to a ribbon of steel where it was laid. The farther the railroads went, the farther the peddler went and the

closer civilization pushed at his heels. As the cities grew large, a different type of peddler came into existence. The new peddler was a local vendor, one who sold his wares or services in the day and returned to his home each evening.

Better roads, canals, and eventually the railroad took the city to the farmers and brought the farmers to the city. The better roads which the peddler was crying for was also his downfall. The need for big loads and long distance peddling was vanishing. Towards the end, and this is true of Cache Valley, the main items peddled were unique.

CHAPTER III

GOODS AND SERVICES

To more fully understand the Yankee Peddler, one should know the goods and services he rendered. What type of goods were available? What did they buy that were not necessities? What "notions" were available? What did one do when their eyesight became bad or their teeth were in poor condition? What did people do in their small amounts of leisure time? What did they do for entertainment?

Cloth and Weavers

In the civilized world one of man's goals is to dress himself comfortably and respectfully, and in many areas clothing was brought to the door only by the peddlers.

From early colonial times well into the 19th Century, a great deal of the frontierman's clothes came from the family loom. Most of the cloth was a coarse wool or a mixture called Lindsey-Woolsey. This was part wool and part linen. This of course was durable but not the most comfortable. Housewives deprived of so many niceties craved the new store calicoes, ginghams and lace. Many a woman was appeased or her troubles partially soothed by either a new dress or the material with which to make one. Shawls were also a prized possession, especially for the genteel woman of the early colonial era. Even such a small luxury as inexpensive lace brought much pride and satisfaction to wives with such few luxuries. Often the lady of the house bought a whole bolt,

especially if it was a sale piece. The mother, daughter, sons, and even the father may show up shortly after all with dresses or shirts from the same material.

Of the many articles carried, especially by the trunk peddler, along with toilet waters, mirrors, spices, nostrums, tea or coffee, little bits of lace, ribbon or cloth brought the biggest profits.[1] Home tatting, corcheting or embroidery were often done and use for barter in obtaining peddled goods. These were gladly given up for some store lace or bright colored silk ribbon.

Like today there were women then who did not like to, did not have the time, or didn't know how to sew. The itinerant tailor made his entry here. It is claimed that he was much more common in the North than in the South.[2] Probably because most of the Southern gentlemen sent to England to have their clothes tailormade there, and those not of the genteel class made their own. In the North the tailor who peddled his services seemed to have done quite well. In 1700 the journeyman tailor made twelve schillings a week plus food.[3] In time he began carrying a few yards of cloth with him, rather than relying entirely upon the household, then to carrying a few bolts of material and other items necessary to finish a dress completely with lace, buttons and all. The famous Brooks Brothers Clothing of New York began in this way.[4]

---

[1]Scull, 60.

[2]Dolan, 117.

[3]Wright, 104-106.

[4]Dolan, 117.

Jim "Jubilee" Fisk made his first money peddling paisley shawls. He had a head for business long before he went into the railroads. One of his itinerant partners would go on ahead to a small community. There he would seek out a pretty and well-known woman. He presented her with a paisley shawl, and asked her to faithfully wear it to church the following Sunday. As soon as Sunday had passed, Fisk and partner appeared in town. Their carriage load of shawls sold quickly to the other women of the town.[1] From this Fisk moved on to his railroad career.

Of all the home industries, probably the greatest was the making of cloth. Colonial housewives spent much of their time making cloth for the family's clothes, so when it could be afforded they were happy to invite the itinerant weaver in. The average farm wife carded, spun, wove, and dyed her own wool. The dye tub was a regular feature of the big colonial kitchen and the indigo peddler made his regular visits to supply dye for the popular blue that tinted so many of the clothes and bed covers in that early period. Indigo was the most commonly used dye. This produced from a dark blue down to a light blue with all the shades in between. (This may be why Washington's army choose blue for its dominant color.) The shade of blue depended on the amount of indigo used and the length of time the cloth was soaked. Indigo was raised in the South and sent North where the peddlers picked it up and distributed it.

As stated most of the cloth was woven in the home on the family loom. Itinerants of the weaving trade also used the family loom; however, a few

---

[1]Wright, 62.

hauled their own in a wagon. Up to 1800, looms were imported, but after this time they were made in this country and large numbers were peddled.[1]

Rag rugs were also peddled. Many a weaver gathered small bits of cloth and rags on their journeys; with these he made colorful hand-made rag rugs which he peddled on the side.

American-made cotton goods, silk ribbons, handkerchiefs, garters, and suspenders began to show up around 1800. Most of these came from New England and Philadelphia. New England was the great textile center of the new nation and since it was also the birthplace of the "Damn Yankee," it was very natural for the peddler to quickly add these U. S. made products to his list.

The hat peddlers should be mentioned. Hat makers and manufacturers hired itinerants to dispose of their products. In the larger cities or towns it was different. Where there was enough population, clothing and hat stores filled the need. But in the less populated and scattered regions the peddler was the supplier. Around 1800 women's straw bonnets became popular. These and most hats were sold along with the peddler's general stock.

Tinware, Metal Goods, and Miscellaneous

In early colonial America most everyday-ware was wooden. These were turned or whittled out of hardwood. The wood for making this wooden-ware was commonly called "dish-timber." A big chunk of hardwood made a whole "nest" of bowls. Bowls, cups, saucers, skimmers and butter molds were all made from wood. Tubs, pails, dumb-bettys, keelers,

---

[1]Dolan, 121.

piggins and similar items were made and peddled throughout the settled areas. Later, pewter was used in large amounts but was quite expensive for common use. It was soft and had to be handled carefully so as not to bend or break it. If left too near the fire it melted or cracked.

In 1738 two Irishmen, William and Edgar Pattison, settled in Berlin, Connecticut and started a new trade, tinware.[1] Tinware to that time came from England and demanded high prices. The Pattisons imported sheet tin from England and began working it into cooking utensils. They did their work at their home and when they had built up a stock they peddled it locally in Berlin. They had immediate success with the new bright shining utensils as compared to the dull, drab, dented pewter. In fact, the industry grew so fast and became so lucrative, both apprentices and peddlers had to be hired. Soon other Berliners took to manufacturing the shiny new tinware. Just before 1850, at the height of the tinware industry, Berline, Connecticut consumed 10,000 boxes of sheet tin annually.[2]

Tinware was packed in large trunks weighing about fifty pounds when filled. Two of these packs were placed on the peddler's back. Later, packs were slung on horses. After 1790, when the nation began its turnpike mania, the peddlers moved up to wagons. By 1820, five tinsmiths in the plant could keep twenty-five peddlers supplied. Deep into the South they went and north into Canada; often their routes were as long as 1,200 to 1,500 miles. Large wagon loads of tinware often held a value of one to two thousand dollars, and weighed as much as two ton.[3] Tinsmiths

---

[1] Dolan, 144.

[2] Wright, 72.

[3] Ibid., 73.

were sent to cities where the peddler would later show up. Here the tinsmith set up shop with a supply to restock the itinerant as he passed through. Later some tinware was painted or varnished. Small items such as pins, needles, scissors, combs, buttons, children's books, and cotton-stuffs were added to the tin peddler's wagon. "It was the tin peddler who was to be known as the original Yankee Peddler."[1] For a full 150 years, tinware was the number one item carried by the Yankee Peddler.

What a difference! Today we have our stainless steel, aluminum, teflon or glassware. But in those days there was never a more welcomed gift than tinware. Many brides were very happy and proud with tinware gifts of cups, pans, kettles or maybe a dishpan.

For many years during the colonial period and after people were fond of brass. Brass was mainly for fire screens or candlesticks but later old brass items were picked up by peddlers and taken home to be made into clocks, bells, lamps, and a very popular item, brass buttons. In early days, pastures were not all fenced in as today, and farmers purchased brass cow bells from the passing itinerant. They were also used for school bells and sleigh bells.

Iron goods such as cast iron pots, fireplace irons, iron cranes, (which the big pots hung on), griddles, pokers, long iron forks and the age old iron skillet were also items hawked by the itinerant.

Knives, the indispensable item for centuries, were a treasured item. Before the 18th Century, none were the folding type but by the 1700's the folding pocket knife was invented and added to the peddler's long list of items. Even the small penknife which was used for retrimming the quill

---

[1]Wright, 74.

pen, was a main item in his trunk or wagon. Most cutlery sold in this country up to about 1832 was imported from England. In 1832 a small place in Maine began producing cutlery which was peddled.[1]

Pottery, as fragile as it is, was carried by itinerants. Up until 1755, all pottery used in this country had been imported from England. Huge amounts of enameled earthenware were imported from Holland also. But by the end of the 18th Century, many potteries sprang up along the Atlantic seaboard and were turning out crude stoneware. By 1825 some porcelain was turned out in Jersey City and Philadelphia but this gradually moved to Trenton, which is still the center of this industry today.[2] The pottery included milkpans, bowls, cider jugs, and crocks. From the 1850's on, China figurines of ladies, highly colored canaries and parrots, vases, dogs and other animals were peddled. Many of these are sought after today as collector's items. The Germans of Pennsylvania as early as the 1720's produced a pottery both for local use and commercial sale. Even some Italian peddlers hawked plaster casts of famous masterpieces and statuettes throughout New York, Philadelphia and the surrounding countryside.

The first basket-makers were no doubt redmen. These natives had different designs and materials according to their locale. A Morrison, from Tennessee, peddled them as far South as Atlanta, Georgia.[3] Gypsies also carried a line of baskets. Brooms also came directly from the Indians. These were peddled by the Indians for 8d to 9d apiece, but later

---

[1]Wright, 48.

[2]Ibid., 59.

[3]Ibid., 62.

the colonists made their own brooms or had them imported from the Mother Country. By 1819 Hampshire County, Massachusetts was producing 70,000 brooms a year;[1] even though many farmers planted their own broom corn and made their own. Gradually the tin peddler added brooms to his stock and carried them in large bundles on his wagon.

Brooms, plated silver, baskets, razors, and even window glass was delivered right to the front door by itinerants. The window glass came only in small panes because in those days they were blown by a glass blower. After the roads and canals were developed, the greased "glazed" paper gave way to glass panes. Before 1800 there was little window glass peddled because it was too heavy for a trunk on a back.

Following the revolutionary invention of the Benjamin Franklin stove many stove factories sprang up and immediately peddlers took to the frontier with wagon loads. As many as twenty-five stoves could be hauled by a wagon.[2] Peddlers often set the stoves up in a local tavern for all who came in to stand around and see how they really worked. (At times prospective buyers were afraid the stove poisoned the air.)

From about 1825 on, after a more efficient cast iron plow had been invented, many a peddler with his big teams and wagon began distributing the new farm implement throughout the U. S. As new farm implements were invented they were added to his wagon. True, most general stores carried these farm goods, but if the implements were delivered right to the door, the farmer bought rather than make a ten or twenty mile trip to town.

---

[1] Wright, 63.

[2] Dolan, 155.

Bulky items were carried such as washing machines, corn-shellers, winnowing machines, spinning wheels, looms, organs, well pumps, plows and even furniture. The peddler might specialize in one item and nothing else.

There was peddling of wagons and carriages. They could be seen on almost any main route. A dozen or more vehicles tied together and pulled by a big team. Horses, mules and oxen were sold in the same manner.[1]

"Store boats" became common on the big rivers. They pulled up to the bank of the river and gave a blast from a horn or whistle announcing their arrival. The settlers went down to the itinerant boat and often did what we today call "shopped." Many of these boats became very elaborate and sold most everything.[2]

In the early 19th Century animal husbandry began showing faint signs of progress. It became fairly common for a man with a great stallion to follow the road. Sometimes the stallion might be in a four-wheeled wagon, being pulled by a pair of mules. He would stop at a farm house and bargain until a price was decided upon. An owner of an exceptionally fine stallion might make a good living. This was also done with fine bulls.

Clocks

Up until 1800, most clocks in the U. S. were imported from Great Britain. They were received in the parts stage, and assembled here by watch-makers. These were mainly the tall grandfather clocks. A

---

[1] Dolan, 67.

[2] Ibid., 79.

Connecticut Yankee, Eli Terry, conceived the idea of reducing the size of the clock so that it could be set on a shelf or mantel. In 1793 he began his business, cutting the parts from hardwood and finishing them with a file. Twice a year he left home with his clocks and peddled to the west as far as the Hudson. The clocks sold from twenty to forty dollars each.[1] These did not sell well however because they were too expensive. About 1810 he sold out to Silas Hoadly and Seth Thomas. Shortly after he opened his own shop. Like Eli Whitney and his mass production in guns, Eli Terry began mass production of clocks. A number of businessmen in Waterbury, Connecticut backed Mr. Terry. They bought a mill on a stream, bought machinery and began to lay out 500 clocks at one time. Some claim he made 4,000 clocks his first years. These mass production clocks sold for $15 apiece. By 1852 it is said Eli could stand at his window and see eight to ten wagons at a time loading with his clocks for peddling only.[2]

By 1837 brass had become cheap enough so that Chauncey Jerome, who had worked with Eli Terry, began stamping clock parts out of sheet brass with machinery. The finished brass parts for a one day clock sold for five or six dollars. By 1840 one hundred thousand clocks were put out a year and became a regular part of the peddler's stock.[3] Peddling clocks however was very difficult. More often than not, a clock was a sign of prestige in the community and if the Joneses bought one, naturally to keep up with them, the neighbor had to buy one also. Even the poor

---

[1] Wright, 78-79.

[2] Dolan, 163.

[3] Wright, 79-80.

felt a certain advantage to owning a clock.

A note payable was a common way to purchase a clock. In fact, by the 1830's this practice was so common that men went into business just collecting on the notes payable. Collis Huntington started his financial career as a bill collector for clocks which were distributed by the peddlers.[1] Most clocks were sold on a trial basis and paid for when the peddler came that way again. At times customers gave their note for a clock and the note proved worthless, showing that some peddlers were not the only dishonest people in those days. (Honesty of peddlers will be brought out in more detail later in this chapter.)

Clocks were purchased by bartering pigs, salt pork, hams, or dried beans. Some clock peddlers who traveled through the South traded for mules which they drove north and sold, thus making a handsome profit. For nearly a century the clock business was dominated by the Yankee Peddler. Some became clock tinkers, repairing them as they went.

Notions

The first American combs were crude wooden affairs whittled with a knife. The making of these began at Leominster, Massachusetts, was fathered by the peddling system and is still centered in that same town. Enock Noyes began making horn combs with primitive machinery there in 1759. So fast did his business prosper that neighbors, mostly farmers, took it up. Today Leominster is the centre of the world's horn comb

---

[1]Silvio A. Bedini, "On Time--The Yankee Clock Pedlar," Hobbies, LX (February, 1956), 40.

industry.[1]

From that small town and other smaller factories in Philadelphia and Connecticut came the comb supply for the trunk peddler. Wood, brass, and horn combs began to fill the comb demand. The shiny brass combs made an instant success with the Negro people. Peddlers told them brass combs made kinky hair straight. Older ladies were told brass combs restored the natural beauty and color of grey hair. It is claimed these old fairy tales still exist in some parts of the South today.[2]

A sideline from the horn comb industry was bone buttons. Later pewter, brass and silver buttons were manufactured, all of which were peddled. Originally, buttons slipped through loops rather than through the cloth as they do today. The early colonists, like ourselves, not only used buttons for utility but for decoration. Buttons were worn all over the suit of clothing and were greatly admired. This, of course, was a boon to the peddler's button business. In fact, our term "dough boys" comes from the buttons worn on soldier's uniforms. The large, round, white buttons were made from white bone. These buttons resembled large balls of dough on the uniform, hence, "dough boys."[3]

One of the most popular type of buttons were brass. Scrap brass was collected by the wandering peddler. Enough collected, the scrap brass was hammered flat, then cut into all sizes and shapes of buttons with dies and punches. These were not as popular as the shiny brass buttons from England but the peddlers had little trouble selling their own

---

[1]Wright, 42-43.

[2]Dolan, 169.

[3]Ibid., 170.

creations. These and the earlier brass ornaments were hawked in the U. S. wherever the itinerant traversed. They sold well and carried a high mark-up.

To many, jewelry was a luxury. In primitive New England, jewelry was rare. Later in the early 1700's rings, gold necklaces, lockets, gold sleeve buttons and earrings became popular. They became popular in spite of the preacher's words against such evil and sinful things. A cheaper line of breastpins, rings, earrings and pinchbeck[1] always appeared in the peddler's trunk.

Today pins and needles are a common place, but in the past centuries this was not so. In fact, pins were so expensive that they were given as gifts for birthdays, weddings and anniversaries. If a little money was set aside to buy pins next time the peddler came around, it was known as "Pin money." This term is still with us today. These were peddled by the tons in America.[2] Pins were, for a long time, imported from England. At first they came in a loose lot wrapped in paper. By 1744, they were in boxes and by the 1780's they were arranged in rows on a sheet of paper much like we buy them today. These pins were not cheap. The revolutionary price was seven shillings sixpence a dozen. Rhode Island tried making brass wire into pins but failed. The industry did not really begin until about 1831 when they were successfully made in Connecticut by a machine invented the same year. After this most pins

---

[1] Pinchbeck: this was a cheaper jewelry made from a soft material. This material was stamped, pressed and soldered together, then thinly washed with gold.

[2] Dolan, 176.

carried by peddlers were from Connecticut.[1]

Spectacles were sold for over a century in this country by peddlers. Almost all glasses sold before the Civil War were imported from Germany. Most eye failure is failure to see things close up and of course to remedy this, one needs glasses which magnify. Glasses came in five strengths of magnification, one to five, one being the weakest.[2] The customer tried on the spectacles until he found the desired strength and made a purchase.

Food

Peddling of foods and perishable commodities was performed on a local basis. Peddlers could not travel far for fear of the loss of their goods. Those who peddled perishables were known as local vendors and will be mentioned later. In the early years the only foodstuffs carried by the peddlers were spices, salt and sugar. Later hugh quantities of rum came out of New England and sold for about two shillings a gallon. Around 1750 as tea and coffee were introduced, many peddlers filled their packs for the fast growing popular hot drinks. The coffee was purchased for about four cents a pound in fifty pound bags, and sold for eight to ten cents a pound many miles inland. The coffee was green and had to be roasted and ground by a member of the household.[3]

---

[1] Wright, 45-46.

[2] Dolan, 179.

[3] Dolan, 259.

Some crude cane sugar, honey and maple sugar was peddled. Huge amounts of salt were also used, mainly for preserving foods. Pepper, nutmeg, cloves and ginger were the most common spices peddled and the most valuable. A and P (Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company) products were sold door to door throughout the settled areas of the United States and were the foundation for the great chain of A and P Supermarkets which are presently found all over the U. S.

From 1800 on, oysters and fish were peddled throughout New England. The oysters were packed in kegs, slid into saddle bags and carried by horseback to the interior. Later wagons were loaded and taken inland from the coast. While the loads of fish were usually sold for cash, many times they received in trade such merchandise as butter, cheese, pork, and brooms.

Even though most farmers did their own butchering, the itinerant butcher was known in the early days. Autumn was the most favorable time to make his rounds and the attic or smoke house would be filled with hams, sausages, corned beef and pork. Often he bartered for the fats and tallow which he made into candles and peddled.

Doctors, Nostrums, Medicines and Dentists

Since graduates of medical schools were unheard of, almost anyone could become a doctor. Quite often it was a hobby or part time job. One might be a storekeeper, a school teacher or public servant and after his day's work, claim to be a doctor. Peddlers of nostrums ended up with the title of "doctor."

The back country traveling doctor was in many cases more ignorant than his city colleagues but performed his duties to the best of his

ability. He carried a store of remedies and a bag with a few rusty surgical instruments. He was prepared to pull teeth, remove bullets, set legs (if not broken too badly), or amputate. It was not until the middle of the 18th Century that doctors began aiding in child delivery, which before that time was considered an improper acitivity for a man.

Some physicians also served as pharmacists, made their own drugs and carried them about in their saddle bags. His medicines were known as "my pills," or "my syrup." While there were many frauds, others had great faith in their medicine. Suppose a person had an ailment. A medicine was administered. If the patient was relieved or recovered, naturally the itinerant felt it was his doings and his faith in his own medicine was greatly strengthened. From this grew the famous medicineman and the medicine show. Under gasoline torches, wearing flashy clothes and a silk hat, the traveling medicine man pushed his wares. "Ghastly and ineffective as their remedies may have been, they probably brought some comfort into the lives of rural people, and if only through their inadequacy, paved the way for progress."[1]

A few of the medicines peddled were Sourdock Ointment for the itch, Poultices of Everlasting, Mullein for the bowels, and Blackberry Root for dysentery. Ward's Anodyne Pearls were worn on the baby's neck both as a necklace and a teether. Bezoar Stone was for curing snakebites, Bateman's Pectoral Drops for colds, Seneca Snake Root and Duffy's Elixir for other ailments. Turlington's Original Balsam was guaranteed to cure at least fifty-one specific diseases. A brand of Brandreth's Pills claimed

---

[1]Dolan, 208.

it could cure a cold, cough, consumption, asthma, rheumatism, pleurisy, typhus, ague, cramps, whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever or smallpox. Often these were purchased in quantities by the peddler and sold under their own name.

Some medicinemen claimed their preparations cured cancer, toothache, gout, labor pains and even snake bite. Quassia cups were sold in large numbers, particularly in the South.[1] These were about the size of coffee cups and turned out of a dark-colored tropical wood. The water would absorb some healing potents from the wood which became the medicine. This was mainly for kidney trouble and of course if the cup were filled enough, the increased water intake proved beneficial to the patient.

A Mrs. Sibylla Masters of Philadelphia was making "tuscarora rice." She had it ground from Indian corn at a nearby mill and sold it as a sure-cure for consumption. This "medicine" found its way into peddler's packs.[2]

The wandering herb doctor carried, along with other patent medicines, sassafras, bergamont, wormwood, rhubarb and sweet basil. Up until the 1900's many of these could still be heard crying out their wares.

The essence peddler filled his trunk with peppermint, bergamont, wintergreen extracts and bitter. These were mixed with local homemade liquors and were in great demand, because they soothed and brought comfort just from the alcohol content. This factor made the medicines popular and they sold well. Patients got their alcohol under the pretense that

---

[1] Dolan, 201.

[2] Wright, 120.

it was medicine. It was used both as remedies and antidotes.

Some peddlers along with their medicines and remedies, carried a tin trunk of dry goods, combs, jewelry and other small articles. Some carried as little as a basket-full while others went out with wagon loads.

Just as the tin peddler became a tinker, the clock peddler a repairer of clocks, the hawkers of medicines built up a reputation of medical knowhow and more often than not, became a "doctor."

Before 1830 most dentists were itinerants, many being only tinkers, or handymen. Sometimes the clock-maker, the barber, the ivory turner, or wig-maker was the dentist. Artificial teeth were made by itinerants. Hippopotamus ivory was used for false teeth and men who had had many teeth extracted wore "plumpers" (little ivory balls to fill out their cheeks). George Washington was supposed to have had artificial teeth. Paul Revere the great patriot and silver smith "fixed some hundreds of teeth" and he advertised that he would be glad to "wait on any gentleman or lady at their lodging."[1]

Nathaniel Hawthorne gives us an early description of a dentist in the back country in 1838:

> A young fellow twenty or thereabouts, pained with a toothache. A doctor, passing on horseback, with his black leather saddle bags behind him, a thin, frosty-haired man. Being asked to operate, he looks at the tooth, lances the gum, and the fellow being content to be dealt with on the spot, he seats himself in a chair on the stoup with great heroism. The doctor produces a rusty pair of iron forceps, a man holds the patient's head . . . A turn of the doctor's hand and the tooth is out. The

---

[1]Dolan, 206.

patient gets up, half-amazed pays the doctor ninepence, pockets the tooth and the spectators are in glee and admiration.[1]

Before dentistry reached a stage of fair competency, a young man by age thirty or thirty-five expected many of his teeth with carries, to be gone or a few years later, all would be gone. This was no different than going bald at middle age. Because of this situation, making and peddling toothache remedies was a lucrative business. Manufacturers of these remedies sold both to peddlers and local drug stores.

Dancing, Music, Drama and Skills

After the bare necessities were obtained, singing, dancing, fencing, languages and music wove their way into the lives of the people. Except for a few, the early Americans were a singing people. The singing master was usually an itinerant. Arriving in a new town he announced in school or church he was taking on a few pupils. The singing class met once a week in the church or schoolhouse for lessons. Gradually the enrollment began to fall off and the itinerant moved to another town.

The dancing master of the South was usually an itinerant as was also the fencing master. Traveling from town to town he stayed only as long as the patronage paid him. Others even ventured out to make a living by teaching boxing.

Entertainment

One of the oldest and simplest forms of itinerant amusement was the puppet show. For centuries these were known throughout Europe, and

---

[1]Dolan, 206-207.

became popular in the United States.

The organ grinder and the monkey or the trained bear were occasionally met going through the country or city streets. They were usually foreigners and did here what they had done in their homeland. Elephants, African lions, camels, bisons, dead whales, llamas, ocelots, giraffes and unicorns all were used to attract a crowd and collect a small fee to see such animals. Freaks such as albinos, a lady with no hands or arms, Siamese twins, mermaids, giants, midgets and fat people were all part of the itinerant amusement to the young nation. These small itinerant attractions were the beginning of the circus, as were also horsemanship, acrobats, menageries, and trains of animals.

P. T. Barnum was born in Connecticut in 1810. He began as a peddler of molasses candy, gingerbread and cherry rum. Then he bought a 161 year old Negro who claimed she was the nurse of George Washington. Finally he moved up to his "Greatest Show on Earth." By 1820 more than thirty shows were roaming the U. S., it had become so popular.[1] By 1851 the two shows, the menagerie and circus, united into one attraction. Then from the one-ring show to the two and then to the three-ring circus. To prevent trouble, mainly with the clergy, the circus was not a "show" or diversion, but a Great Moral and Education Exhibition.

As the 18th Century closed and the new one began, a taste for theatricals began to spread. Sol Smith was one of the greatest in his field of itinerant actors. Once, in a double log cabin they were ready to perform; the room was filled but there were no candles. The

---

[1]Wright, 195.

owner quickly made some out of linen rolled in tallow, and potatoes were used for the candlesticks. Slowly the candles burned out one by one, the speeches were cut short and the curtain came down just as the last candle went out. The people had to file out in the dark, but were delighted with the traveling entertainment.[1] At one time a small fourteen foot square room was so crowded he (Sol Smith) placed a table just outside, in front of a window. The acting was performed outside while the audience sat indoors. They took in $40 that night.[2] At times they used real Indians in the production. Once the Indians had had a little too much fire water, became too realitic, made up their own dances and songs, and demolished the theater.

Musical instruments were peddled. This started with the Jew's Harp which sold for about 15¢ each, on to factory-made violins which sold for about $10, around the turn of the 19th Century, although they were not called violins but fiddles. Many peddlers carried fiddles with them and if asked to have supper and stay the night, gladly obliged by playing the family a lively tune or two. They even played for fairs and county square-dances.

Organs were peddled. It may seem a little strange but these also were carried about the country in a wagon and sold to those who could afford them. Those who owned an organ had almost reached the height of ambition. The peddler picked out a prosperous looking farm, arranged for a demonstration, set up the instrument in the parlor and put on a

---

[1] Wright, 207-208.

[2] Ibid., 208.

little concert. Often friends and neighbors were invited in to participate in a hymn-sing. The peddler then hoped the family could "not" afford to send the instrument back.

Artists

It has been said that as soon as a people reach the stage where they want to leave behind a likeness of themselves for their descendents, they are safely past the primitive stage.

By 1750 life in the colonies had progressed and prospered as to allow some cultural luxuries. One of these was to have a portrait, to hand down to posterity and if one could not afford a portrait then a profile would have to suffice. Most portrait painters and muralists in our early history were itinerant artists. There was not enough wealth to keep them in one place. Artists talents ranged from very good to poor. Most itinerants were in the poor class. Some modeled in wax, others did portraits or cut silhouettes, while others were satisfied to decorate household furniture. When the portrait business was slow, often they were barkers or hairdressers.

For many the only way to obtain a likeness of oneself was to invite in a silhouette cutter or a painter of miniatures. The silhouette cutter was the cheapest and most common. "During the first half of the 1800's one could expect to meet a silhouette-cutter almost any place people gathered."[1] Silhouettes became so popular that exhibitions were common. The silhouette-cutter carried his black paper and shears and charged anywhere from 50¢ down, depending on how hungry he was. Some

---

[1]Dolan, 132.

silhouettes were snipped out of black paper, mounted on a white background. Whole groups were often done and with amazing accuracy and likeness. The name silhouette comes from the Frenchman, Etienne de Silhouette who in 1757 was made Controleur Generale of France. He immediately instituted such widespread economies that anything cheap was called a silhouette. He died in 1767 but in 1825 the shadow portraits were so famous and inexpensive in England that Silhouette's name was used.[1]

A Frenchman Auguste Edouart came to this country in 1839. He traveled the country and in his career, cut no less than 50,000 silhouettes.[2] Photography sounded the death knell for this art.

As far as portraits were concerned, quantity rather than quality seems to have been the most profitable. John Wesley Jarvis, an itinerant artist, did a face in one, one-hour sitting. Then he handed the portrait to an assistant who painted in exactly the same background and drapery. Many of his sea Captains are all standing in front of the same red curtain and are holding the same telescope.[3] Other artists in the slow winter months painted several lines of both male and female busts, then added the faces in the summer when business picked up. This it is said accounts for the fact that so many old time portraits seem to have a sameness. Many men never owned a white shirt and tie or women a formal gown, but their faces were quickly and cheaply put on one. Maybe the man had seen military service in his past. His face could be quickly added to a body

---

[1] Wright, 139.

[2] Ibid., 138.

[3] Ibid., 132-133.

with a rank of Major or General.

Itinerant decorators also hawked their artistic talents. They decorated bridal chests, fireboards, daily utensils and other items.

Skills

Many peddlers took with them only their skills and maybe a few tools. They repaired anything and everything. Any common laborer or skilled workman could take to the road.

Shoemakers and cobblers usually farmed in the springtime, then peddled their services in the late fall and winter. Carrying only their tools, the household furnished the leather or purchased it at the closest tanner. Often the shoes were made to last the family a full year. After the Civil War, journeyman shoemakers took to the South and West to provide shoes for the country. (His pay was mostly in country pay.) These old shoes were square, because both shoes were made just the same, no right or left. When the shoemaker found a likely town he settled down and opened up his shop. Then the trade came to him.

Candle-makers traveled about helping the housewife make candles. Tombstone cutters, chair-seat makers, and weavers, whitesmiths (those who went about making and mending smoke jacks, locks, hinges and bells), itinerant barbers, rat killers, cabinet makers and carpenters also traversed the open road.

Semi-skilled labor was the apprentice system. The apprentice (usually a young man) worked for a period of years in his chosen field. After a few years work and experience, he became known as a "journeyman,"

because he was now expected to travel from place to place in his new trade.[1]

Originally the tinker was a fellow skilled in the repairing of pewterware. He went from house to house repairing bent, broken or damaged pewter dishes and spoons because they were so soft and lost their shape easily. He carried his tools in the saddle bags and traveled from town to town. He straightened, soldered and even recast pewter in his hardwood molds. Thus he became a handyman, a tinker, a fix-it man. Often he repaired other metal items such as brass and tinware, as they became more common.

Grinders took to the roads, sometimes with just a soft sonte or if he was fortunate, a wheel. With this on his back or in a small wagon, he traveled about providing a skilled service to many farms and homes. He sharpened scissors, knives, axes, wood-working tools, and razors. Often he carried a hand-bell to announce his coming.

One all-around handyman was Charles Willson Peale, of Philadelphia. He was a coachmaker, a silversmith, a saddlemaker, a modeler in wax and plaster, a taxidermist, conducted a private museum, served in the legislature and was a dentist.[2]

One of the most important figures in pioneer times was the gunsmith. In larger cities he had his shop, but in the scattered settlements his services were provided only when he came around or when one traveled to him. As firearms became more complicated in their mechanism, gunsmiths were in more demand. Most gunsmiths were Germans. These old time guns

---

[1]Dolan, 116.

[2]Ibid., 134.

consisted mainly of three parts --lock, (trigger and hammer mechanism) steel barrel, and the stock. If any of these parts went bad the owner had to have it repaired or replaced. If the peddler could sell a whole new gun, it was called "lock, stock and barrel."[1]

Religion

Until the first Great Awakening, a little over a hundred years after our Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, religious freedom was almost completely non-existent. In May 1738, George Whitefield landed at Savannah, Georgia and began his preaching. By 1742 so many preachers began running around that the Assembly of Connecticut passed a law forbidding ministers to preach outside their own parish without permission.[2] From this Great Awakening and the religious fervor which followed gave rise to many an itinerant preacher. Itinerant preaching furnished a very meager livelihood, so many worked at a trade during the day and preached at night or Sundays. Some were tailors, some carpenters, physicians, or teachers. Many wore homespun clothes and wore their hair long. Few were educated or possessed very many books. When one felt God had called him to preach he did not look up a college or university, but just began his preaching.

The following is a quote taken from Richardson Wright's book, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America. This is incorporated because of the descriptive scene the author has created. It shows the life of the peddler

---

[1] Dolan, 139-140.

[2] Wright, 147.

of the Word.

> . . . he went through storms of wind, hail, snow, and rain; climbed hills and mountains, traversed valleys, plunged through swamps, swam swollen streams, lay out at night, wet, weary and hungry, held his horse by the bridle all night, or tied him to a limb, slept with his saddle blanket for a bed, his saddle or saddle-bags for his pillow and his old big coat or blanket, if he had any, for covering.
>
> Often he slept in dirty cabins, on earthen floors, before the fire; ate roasting ears for bread, drank buttermilk for coffee, or sage tea for Imperial; took, with a hearty zest, deer or bear meat, or wild turkey for breakfast, dinner and supper, if he could get it.[1]

Where there was a congregation and an established church the circuit rider's work was fairly simple. But in the country areas he traveled from house to house and many times covered long stretches of frontier. Arriving at a farm house he would rap on the door and say, "Sister, shall I pray for you?" Usually they were invited in where they prayed, sang and preached. In return he received food and lodging. To isolated families these visits were a source of great joy and inspiration.

Some missionaries and circuit preachers worked for the United States government, making or keeping peace with the Indians or keeping a small portion of the country loyal to the nation.

Aside from their pastoral labor, the itinerant had great influence in his day. Many of the least schooled were better educated than the average person in their flock. This is because most of the peddlers of the Word moved West with the frontier. The larger settled areas had their permanent ministers. The itinerant was a direct way of reaching the rural people, and great political and national interest and spirit

---

[1] Wright, 152.

was passed on by the itinerant preachers.

It was the custom of the preachers years ago to skip lightly over the troubles of this present life and devote most of their time and effort painting the glories and pleasures of Heaven and the life hereafter. This no doubt was because of the hardships, sorrow and long days of toil. To paint pictures of reward, rest, and release from a toil-filled world brought joy and comfort to the masses.

The camp meeting was very popular. To a people who lived by such close margin and so close to nature any type of social intercourse was welcomed.

Another type of peddler of the Word was the Colporteur. The American Tract Society, which was founded for the distribution of religious literature to churches was gaining (impetus) around 1840. Russell B. Cook, executive of the A.T.S. developed the system of American Colportage. By 1856 the society employed regularly 547 Colporteurs and 115 part-time students who worked during their vacations.[1] These men traveled by all kinds of means and distributed and sold Bibles, tracts, religious romances and other pietistic literature. The Tract Society Report by 1859 states that over 3,000,000 families were visited and over 8,000,000 volumes distributed by Colporteurs.[2]

Books and Pamphlets

Book peddlers have been with us for many years and will probably be with us for many more to come. The peddling of reading material begins

---

[1]Wright, 162.

[2]Ibid.

early in United States history. The Chapboard was one of the first printed items in the peddler's pack. (The Chapboard was similar to our comic books today.) Then he added broadsides, ballads, religious books and then popular books. Broadsides and ballads were in great demand. The ballads were usually stores of tragic events, often of a criminal sentenced to death, and his story before he paid for his crime. Also many were personal quarrels or heartbreaks.

Two such examples of the ballad are "the whole trial, examination and condemnation of Jason Fairbanks who was executed at Philadelphia for cutting of Peggy Placket's head under a hedge on the road to Frankford . . ." and another was, this "is the account of a whale that was left ashore by the tide in the bay of Chesapeak, with a ship of 5000 tons in his belly, called the Merry Dane, of Dover . . . ."[1]

After 1812, popular ballads were commonly hawked because the words were put to tunes everyone knew. Catechisms, primers, alphabets, Chapboards, Bibles, religious books, spelling books, and many others were found in the peddler's pack. It is estimated that between 1680 and 1830 over 6,000,000 copies of The New England Primer were issued in this country.[2] Many were distributed by the book peddler. As the nation built better roads and better wagons the itinerant book sales rose steadily.

A well-known figure to historians is Parson Weems. For thirty years Mason Locke Weems (that was his correct name) peddled books and reading material up and down and across our young nation. On his long journeys Parson carried his fiddle and played at dances, puppet shows, fairs and

---

[1]Wright, 69.

[2]Ibid., 51.

weddings. He also was an itinerant preacher, besides being a very successful book salesman. In one year he sold 3,000 cpoies of an expensive Bible. He died on one of his long trips in 1825.[1]

Joseph A. Coe, more commonly known as "Bible Leaf Joe," for years tore the covers off Bibles and sold the pages throughout the country.[2]

Vendors, Misfits, Oddfellows

There seems to be no end to the goods available through the itinerant. If a peddler could convince a buyer to buy his wares he stayed in business. Of the thousands of individual who made their living as peddlers a good share of them were local vendors. They were called shinners, street criers, coster-mongers, hawkers, hucksters, or notion nannies. They sold anything from stoneware to ice cream. Fishermen from Connecticut sold river shad, fruitmen hawked watermelons or Delaware peaches. The yeast man made his rounds with his "barm" (yeast fluid). There was the soap seller who exchanged his slimy mess for suet or beef and pork drippings, "Johnnie Cup O' Tea" the tea vendor, or nut and maple sugar hawkers. The oyster vendors had tin plates, forks, vinegar cruet, and salt and pepper. One just stepped up and ordered what he wanted right there with all the necessities. Sweet potatoes and pepper pots all were part of a vendor's goods. These foods were served in a bowl with a spoon. One just ordered a bowlful and ate standing right there. In the fall the honeycomb vendor appeared. Pastry boys carried rolls, muffins and other sweets on trays on their heads. The gingerbread man

---

[1] Wright, 53.

[2] Ibid.

was a delightful man to have on one's street. One gingerbread man was appointed Baker General of the Continental Army. He amassed a fortune while he was a baker.[1]

There were all sorts of foods peddled: fruits and vegetables, spices, salt, ice, ice cream, pastrys, hot breads, charcoal, household items and gadgets of all kinds. Women were usually the fruit and vegetable coster mongers. Umbrella menders, tinkers, ragmen, organ grinders, and glaziers all added their services to the list. The town crier also was a picturesque figure. He read proclamations, announced runaways and served as the night watchmen. As trains became more common young boys hawked newspapers, books, biscuits, apples, bananas and other fruits in and around the train stations. Even chimney sweeps peddled their services.

Though many local vendors became at times quite a nuisance, they contributed greatly to the goods and services available. Much of the time they sold below the merchant's price. This brought many items within the reach of the poorer people. But, many merchants persuaded their cities to pass ordinances against such nuisances. As early as 1691 New York passed an ordinance that no peddling could be done until the local markets had been open two hours.[2]

Street vendors were not as common before the Revolution as after. The huckstering which grew up in the later 19th Century was the result of the large number who imigrated to our Eastern shores. This was performed mainly by the Jews and Italians. These hucksters were true peddlers and provided a useful service by bringing their wares right to

---

[1]Wright, 238.

[2]Ibid., 233.

the housewife's door.

Gypsies also seemed to keep body and soul together in their wanderings by performing small services. Many worked their way south where the climate appealed to them. Some were small metal and jewelry workers. Some made baskets, others lace, while others told fortunes.

In addition to the throngs of itinerants who took to the roads and highways, there were also those who were misfits. Those with hardly any means of support or really without any purpose. Lazy men, looking for a short cut or any easy way out. There was an influx of these after the American Revolution and even a greater number after the American Civil War.

There were those who were eccentrics, strange recluses who roamed the forests. Johnnie Appleseed was one of these strange characters. His real name was Johnathan Chapman and was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1775. He began his trek westward with a burning desire to plant frontier apple orchards so that settlers would have more than just meat and fish to eat. In 1806 he drifted down the Ohio River with two canoes filled with apple seeds. He wore a tin pan for a hat (which was also used for cooking his food), a sack with holes cut in it for his legs and arms, and went barefoot winter and summer. He also carried a Bible with him and preached often to the Indians. During his forty-six years he planted apple trees bearing fruit in an area of 100,000 square miles. In 1847, after tramping twenty miles he was fed bread and milk at a friendly home, read the Beatitudes to his host, lay down on the floor to sleep and never awoke.[1]

---

[1]Wright, 214-215.

The ladies of ill-repute also were in that current of itinerants. Traveling prostitutes were a common figure among the convicts sent to the Southern colonies. Many followed the wandering armies during the times of wars. Others existed in the cities like they have for centuries in all parts of the world.

Here are a few of the vendors calls; they may be of interest to the reader. This gives us an idea of the peddlers poetic ability to advertise his wares.

Mullet! Mullet! Mullet!
Flounder and black fish!
Shark steaks for dem what likes 'em;
Sword fish for dem what fights 'em;
Fish-ee! Fish-ee![1]

Local fish peddlers carried their fish in pans, or on horseback or in pushcarts.

Here comes the fishman!
Bring your dishpan,
Porgies at five cents a pound!

Fresh Fresh crabs,
Fresh Baltimore crabs;
Put them in the pot
With the lid on top;
Fresh Baltimore crabs![2]

SCISSORS to GRIND!

Jingle Jingle goes the bell

Any razors or scissors
Or penknives to grind!
I'll engage that may work
Shall be done to your mind.

---

[1] Wright, 240.

[2] Ibid., 235.

LOCK OR KEYS

"Any locks to repair? or
keys to be fitted?"

Do you want any locks
Put in goodly repair?
Or any keys fitted,
To turn true as a hair?
THE END

HOT CORN!

"Here's your nice hot corn!
"Smoking hot! Piping hot!
"O what beauties I have got!"

Here's smoking hot corn,
With salt that is nigh,
Only two pence an ear, --
O pass me not by![1]

Charcoal by the bushel,
Charcoal by the peck,
Charcoal by the frying pan
Or any way you lek![2]

In the fall the woodman appeared with his constant cry:

"Wud! Wud! Wud! Wud! Wud!"

The soap man called out:

"Sam! Sam! the soapfat man!"[3]

Honesty of Peddlers

Today with our mass media of communication, the radio, television, newspaper, and advertising, we're very much aware of consumer's goods

---

[1]Wright, illustration between pages 232 and 233.

[2]Ibid., 235.

[3]Ibid.

and the prices. This was not true a century or even fifty years ago. Only those who had just been there or those who lived in the settled areas knew what the going price might be.

Inasmuch as a great deal of the purchasing power was by barter, the peddler had to know the other side of the trade. The peddler strolled through town, acquainted himself with current local town prices, then moved out to the thinly populated regions. Here he exchanged his goods for produce, pelts, home-manufactures or whatever the settler had an excess of. He, of course, knew what these articles were worth and traded accordingly. Naturally enough, the peddler in trading often told the purchaser that corn, or hides, or hams were right then at a bottom. The settler not knowing had to take his word for it. It might just be that those items might be at a premium that particular week or month.

The peddler marked his goods from as low as 100 percent mark-up to 900 percent mark-up. It was considered that there wasn't anything dishonest about this type of transaction. Up to seventy years ago business standards were of that nature. Commercial honesty was not yet born. Earlier large tracts of land were purchased from the Indians for a few glass beads or a bottle of whiskey. Loads of pelts worth thousands of dollars were bought with a hand full of trinkets. In the South sand and stones were slipped in cotton bales to bring up the weight. But even so, the peddler carried a none-too-bright of a reputation. One local New England historian classified peddlers with rum dealers and gamblers. Another observer, writing in a paper The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge published in London, said to its readers, "Even the Americans themselves--possessing a

respectable share of self-esteem--do not estimate very highly the character of their peddlers . . . ."[1]

It seems the Yankee Peddler was the butt of the national jokes and the target of many visitors to America. Today foreigners make remarks about our over-heated homes, pampered wives and unnecessary skyscrapers. Before the Civil War it was the American spitting habit and the peddler. He, the peddler, was accused of passing on wooden nutmegs, cucumber seeds, oak-leaf cigars, polyglot Bibles and realistically painted basswood hams.

Wagon doctors also plied the country, either pulling a long train of rebuilt wagons or taking tools to work on wagons on his way. The claim is wagon peddlers were very dishonest. He replaced just enough so the wagon would roll, then gave it a heavy coat of bright paint and headed for the road. The wagon usually held up long enough for the peddler to dispose of it, then it fell to pieces.

Peddlers had to be sharp and crafty to stay in business. They no doubt had gimmicks or employed a fast tongue to make a sale. To the author, this could not be far from the ridiculous television commercials today. Although, unlike today, there were few local or government restraints on his business practices. Local merchants sold with short weights. The big meat packing plants and food processing plants were producing foods unfit for human consumption. So it was not unorthodox for the peddler to try and make the best of a business transaction.

One of the most notorious of the fakers was the eye-glass peddler. Fake optical schools sold optical diplomas for $50. This made the peddler

---

[1] Wright, 21.

a "doctor" of the eyes. Many of these fakers called on the school teacher in a town and for $5 got the names and addresses of the students in the school. The "eye specialist" then called on each family and told them of the need for glasses for their children. If the patient already had glasses he was quick in assuring them the need for newer, better ones. Often the glasses contained plain window glass. The itinerants usually wore flashy clothes and had a fancy engraved business card. Sometimes they hired an elaborate buggy and had a local driver take them to the wealthy people in the area. Then they fleeced the patient out of hundreds of dollars.

Shady dealings brought more and more state and local legislation against the peddler. Legislation, peddlers' license fees and better transportation for the consumer almost sounded the death knell to peddling.

Most of the itinerants were honest. They were not above getting the most they could out of an item or making the deal as beneficial to themselves as possible, but of the thousands out the majority were honest. Hundreds of young men far away from the manufacturer were trusted with merchandise, a team, wagon, and bartering, making out honest reports and honest returns. Like in any field, although there are a few scoundrels, these alone too often are remembered and talked about.

But it seems most peddlers were honest. They were in business for adventure or looking for a suitable place to settle. Many traced their footsteps year after year. They established routes and followed them many seasons. They built up close friendships with those they came in contact with. Often they tried to cover many miles a day in order that

they might be at a friend's home for supper and have a place to sleep. These had to be honest or they would never have stayed in business. No doubt many were penny snatchers but they were not outright crooks.

Famous Men Who Peddled

Some famous men have already been mentioned. No doubt the list could be made much longer.

Louisa May Alcott's father, Bronson Alcott, peddled as a means of earning a living at the age of seventeen although he thought less of the earnings than he did the adventure. In fact, on his way to Yale he peddled enough almanacs and tinware to buy a suit of clothes. This so impressed Bronson's brother that they both peddled and often made up to 200 percent profit.[1]

Some successful department store owners in America started out with packs on their backs. Probably one of the most famous is the story of Richard. Richard W. Sears peddled watches and did fairly well but the watches he sold did not keep even close to accurate time. He hired a young watch repairman to aid in his work. This young man's name was Alvan C. Roebuck. From this partnership developed the huge nationwide Sears Roebuck and Company.[2]

In 1823 some pigs were burned so badly they had to be killed. A young fourteen year old boy bought the pigs, used the edible meat and made soap out of the fat. He peddled his soap. This was not new except that his soap was unusually good. He purchased more fat, made it into

---

[1]Fawcett, 47.

[2]Dolan, 256-257.

soap and again peddled it. He lived to be eighty years old and see his soap company become a multi-million dollar business. His name was B. T. Babbitt.[1] James Gamble and William Proctor also peddled soap and candles in 1875.[2] A Mr. Fels (Joseph) began peddling homemade soap before the Civil War. He was the founder of the large Fels-Naptha Soap Company of today.[3]

Benedict Arnold peddled woolen goods up and down the Hudson Valley before he served under General Washington.[4] He went as far north as Canada selling his goods: stockings, caps and mittens. He traded for Canadian horses as well as poultry, corn and fish.[5]

Collis Potter Huntington, the Southern Pacific and Central Pacific Railroad magnate began his career as a peddler in Poverty Hollow, Connecticut. Later he acquired a small consignment of goods in New York and headed south. He spent six years in this profession covering the South and West. Much of his early start was in collecting notes on clocks for Connecticut clock manufacturers. It was one of these travels that taught him the knowledge of the topography of the land which later aided in his railroad development.[6]

---

[1] Dolan, 254.

[2] Fawcett, 40.

[3] Golden, 59.

[4] Dolan, 242.

[5] Wright, 23.

[6] Ibid.

Cyrus Hall McCormick peddled his reapers from farm to farm in his early beginning.[1]

Frederick Trenck Stanley, founder of the big Stanley Tool and Hardware Company, started as a peddler. It was actually being out in the field that he became acquainted with the great need and demand for tools and hardware. An example was to replace sagging leather hinges with metal ones.[2]

Printers also hit the road. Of the printing itinerants Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain are the most well known. After a few years on the road, many found small communities where they could settle down and be the owner and editor of the town newspaper. Others traveled the road and had their bottle until their death.

Abraham Lincoln's father was a part-time itinerant.[3]

Levi Straus peddled half way around the world before landing in the California Gold fields with a roll of expensive denim. Gold miners were crying for pants that would hold up under the wear and stress from digging and working in the earth. Levi made pants from his denim. They were a success. Later rivets were put in the pockets to prevent them from tearing out as the miners filled their pockets with ore and gold nuggets.

---

[1] Dolan, 253.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Dolan, 242.

The Use of Bells

Throughout parts of the world bells among peddlers have been fairly common. Some 200 years ago Sir Roger de Coverley of England asked for a more tuneful music on the part of London's strolling tradesmen. It seems that their shrill cries set his teeth on edge. He begged that the street sellers find ways to sweeten their jingles and cries. Apparently they took to using bells and in another century the complaint was not against their cries but against their bells. In fact, by 1850 an Act of Parliament was passed prohibiting the use of bells in streets. Little notice was taken of the act.[1]

Those who sold perishables used a bell more often than those who sold other goods. Hot muffins, fresh fish, produce and the like drew attention by using a bell. As their bells rang they cried out, "Hot fine oat cakes, hot fine oat cakes," or "Butter beans, butter beans." The sweetmeat sellers of India, the water carriers of Morocco, the milk peddlers in Sicily or the numerous medicine peddlers of Japan all use bells.[2]

Bells in America are used but little today. About the only street peddlers music heard are the cries and jingles in the big cities. In our local area we hear only the ice cream man. To the young ones this is a delightful sound, and to those driving it means a small traffic jam and youngsters darting across the street. In California the whistles of the Helm's Bakery trucks can be heard as they go up and down the streets.

---

[1]Lois E. Springer, "Bells," Hobbies, LXII (July, 1957), 54.

[2]Springer, 55.

Lois E. Springer, author of an article in Hobbies magazine, conjectures that those who had clear well sounding voices did not employ the use of bells. They could attract the consumer better themselves. Those who had raucous unpleasing voices did much better with the sound of a tuneful bell.[1]

---

[1] Springer, 54.

CHAPTER IV

THE JEWISH PEDDLERS

As discussed previously, the original peddler in the U. S. was the Yankee Peddler. Oftimes he was called the Connecticut Peddler because so many hailed from that state. The German Jew immigration to the East Coast of the United States changed this. In the 1840's these Jews poured into the eastern ports. Many of them turned to the trade of itinerant salesman. A number of factors caused them to do this. One of the main ones, they were foreigners, another, they were Jews. It was difficult for them to gain employment. There was a great deal of prejudice against them and it was extremely hard to find desirable employment here in the promised land. Another factor was they could not speak the English language. This kept them from better jobs. If they became peddlers they did not have to know the language. To obtain employment the Jew had to sell himself; while peddling he sold his goods. A few words in English, how to make change or barter, and he was prepared enough.

Many turned to peddling because they were their own boss. It was a business. They did not want to work in the big factories and sweat shops for someone who discriminated against them. "Going Peddling" was an opportunity. One could work as hard and long as he wanted. On the road he was free. Also he was learning a new business and later many moved up to a wholesales or retailer, settled down and became prosperous. In addition, it took very little capital to get into the business. Twenty to forty dollars started a good supply for a beginning pack peddler. If

the new immigrant did not have this he borrowed it. The Jewish people clung together. More often than not a Jewish immigrant had some relatives who had already come to America. An uncle, aunt, cousin or brother was usually able and willing to get the newly immigrated relative started. If the relative was a peddler quite often he took the newcomer with him and taught him a few tricks.

It seems most Jewish peddlers were frugal and after a short while built up quite a nest egg for those days. One Jewish peddler at the age of 32 had saved $2000 from his few years of peddling.[1] One Jew peddled for years and when a five and dime store came up for sale he bought it. At retirement he sold out for $11,000 which he turned over to the Jewish home for the aged where he remained until his death. He had a habit which so many of the pack peddlers also acquired. Every night before retiring they washed their own socks. Even in the old folks home this man washed out his socks, after the establishment finally gave up on trying to change him and gave permission. A millionaire who gave fortunes to charity still washed out his own socks each night. A newspaper wrote a story on this man and told of his peculiar habit. Only those who had once peddled knew what that man had been doing years before.

So as the Jewish immigrants flowed into the land of opportunity many flowed into peddling. To many this was a stepping stone, later going into an established business. To others it lasted only a short time until they found a valley which appealed to them and they became farmers or skilled workers. Others used it only as an opportunity to

---

[1] Golden, 21.

learn the language and find something else, while not a few contined to follow the open road until they retired or passed away.

Many did not get rich but they provided a good livelihood for their families and mainly sent their sons and daughters to colleges and universities, and still had a little to retire on. This was mainly possible due to their extra frugality.

The Jewish peddlers can be classified into two main groups. One was the local vendor. These were common in the larger more populated cities. They were the pushcart hawkers who started early in the morning and peddled late at night (often until 10:00 P.M.), but never traveled very far from their home or apartment. These most always returned home for the night. They bought a license to peddle in a certain locale and stayed there for years. This was the main type of peddler who worked Europe. (Most European peddlers were local vendors, and the law watched closely that they did not over-step their boundaries.) Also with this group were those who look a small stock and left the city and traveled maybe a hundred miles. Then spent three or four days peddling back to their home base.

The other type of Jewish peddlers were those who left home and took to the open roads. These usually packed their packs and were gone a week or more. This type covered a large area and their stock was somewhat more diversified. Shortly after the Civil War many of these pack peddlers moved up to wagons which became small traveling department stores. By the 1870's most pack peddlers (those who stayed in the business) had moved up to team and wagon. Settlers were rapidly moving West and the peddler's stock became so large and varied they had to advance to wagons.

The older, smaller pack or two would not accomodate the great variety of new hardware and notions. These pack and wagon peddlers were more of a transient. They were more dependent upon the hospitality of their clients. They spent much of their lives away from home and families. As a rule they were a religious group, returning Fridays when they could for their Jewish Sabbath. Then they stocked on Sunday and returned to their route by Monday.

These latter peddlers who took to the open road came upon a unique circumstance, selling to the Negros. After the Civil War, even though free men, there was discrimination against the Negro. With that existing condition, the Jewish peddler found a poor but large buying population. When the Negros were freed they had a strong desire to possess two things: the male, a hat, and the wife, a wedding band. As many white store owners did not cater to the Negro or share-cropper, the Jew sold both of these two items in large numbers, along with various other goods.

Another factor giving the Jewish itinerant the Negro business was that white store owners did not let the Negro try on shoes or clothing to insure a proper fit. This the Jewish peddler quickly picked up and permitted them this service before making a purchase. The Jews were discriminated against as were the Negros. Therefore the two seemed to understand and patronize one another.

During the last decade of the 19th Century, credit and time buying were used more and more. Again the Negro and poor share-cropper were denied this privilege and discriminated against. The Jewish itinerant quickly began selling on time to both groups and also to others. They

had to do this to compete with established businesses. From the 1880's to the 1920's the Jewish peddler did a large business with the Negro population.

In the 1880's there was again an influx of Jewish immigrants. These came from Eastern Europe to escape religious and political strife and turmoil. Many, like those before them, turned to the trade of itinerant salesman, for the same reasons, although more stayed in the large cities as local vendors.

So after the 1840's many peddlers were Jews. This also is a reason why there was a dislike for peddlers, so many were Jews. If a peddler took a bad debt to court, more often than not the court upheld the resident rather than the itinerant on the grounds the resident had been cheated. Local police made it hard on peddlers, mainly because so many were Jews. In the early 1900's a Peddler's Association was organized with the hope of overcoming some of these difficulties.

Mr. William Provol relates an account of prejudice against him in his book The Pack Peddler. He was peddling in a small town which was hit frequently by peddlers. He was selling the New Swedish matches which burned clear and would strike "anywhere." He stopped at a carpenter shop to solicit sales, then it being nearly noon, he went to a local general store for cheese, crackers and fruit for lunch. While he was eating a carpenter entered with the town constable and accused him of stealing his tools. Young Mr. Provol denied, but his basket was searched and there was a small box of carpenter's squares and compasses found. He was immediately arrested and placed in jail. He sent for his father and a lawyer. After a bitter trial and unjust procedures, it was

discovered that the local general store owner had offered the carpenter two dollars to be in cahoots with him and get the peddler arrested and scare a few out of the country so his business would pick up. Also it was to build up prejudice against the peddlers in order to get the town officials to pass a prohibitory licnese law.[1] In fact, peddlers themselves who moved up as permanent merchants discriminated against their fellow peddlers. The following is a quote taken from Mr. Provol's own peddling record:

> Meanwhile there was a movement going on in most of the towns to establish a peddler's license law. In many of these towns former pack peddlers had retired from the road and, with their life savings, had established themselves as dry goods merchants. The peddler had a wide acquaintence in the neighborhood, having called at most of the homes with his packs of merchandise, so, after he became a permanent member of the community, it was quite natural for him to join the local merchants' association and take an active part in the civic life of the community.
>
> These men also became interested in the political activities of the town in which they were located and had considerable influence with the making of the laws. One of the first activities to which they devoted their attention was the enactment of a peddlers' license law, whereby a peddler was required to pay a high license fee for the privilege of peddling in their community. They did this on the theory that everybody in that town must buy from them, and from them only, not remembering that they themselves had come from the ranks of the pack peddlers. These prohibitive laws put us kids, as well as other pack peddlers, out of business. It was a clear case of selfishness on the part of the ex-peddlers in many cases.
>
> This selfishness, however, like many other human evils, finally brought about a condition wherein the mail order house and the chain stores were able to defeat these very merchants.[2]

---

[1]William Lee Provol, The Pack Peddler (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1937), 67-68.

[2]Ibid., 85.

The Jewish peddler was unique. He was a foreigner, a Jew, his religion was different, his language different, even his eating habits were different. The Indians called the Jewish peddler "egg eaters" because of the large amounts of eggs they ate. This was due to the fact that the meat was seldom prepared Kosher style. But the Jewish peddler played an important role in the economic history of the U. S., both as a peddler and later as a store owner.

PART II

PEDDLING IN NORTHERN UTAH

CHAPTER V

PEDDLERS IN NORTHERN UTAH

The Wasatch front of the Rocky Mountains was permanently settled by the Mormons in 1847. This religious body of people left the state of Illinois in 1846 because of religious persecution. Looking for a place to be left alone, a place away from the mobs, they chose the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. The first immigrants came into the valley in July of 1847, and as the months and years passed thousands found refuge and a home in the mountains.

Shortly after arriving in the Valley, the leader of the Church, Brigham Young, sent explorers out to obtain a knowledge of the surrounding areas. Cache Valley was explored in August of 1847. By 1856 Cache County was organized and had permanent settlers there. Homes, school houses and churches were erected. Small shops and stores in the next decade began to appear on the main streets of many small communities. Saw mills, flour mills, and small factories were also built.

Other settlements sprang up. Far into the north end of Cache Valley (which later fell with the Idaho line), communities grew. Into the Bear Lake region, Western Wyoming and Idaho, members of the Church colonized under the direction of the Latter-day Saint Church leaders. (This was being done in all directions from the headquarters at Great Salt Lake City.)

The soil in Cache Valley and surrounding areas was fertile and the numerous streams which flowed from the canyons supplied ample water for

irrigation and home use. Fruit trees were brought in and orchards planted. Alfalfa, wheat, corn, oats and barley had been crops from the beginning. Sheep, beef, and dairy herds dotted the pastures of the lush low lands and also the green canyons. Raspberry patches were planted, hives of bees cultured and fresh fish were seined from nearby Bear Lake.

Wagon freighting brought goods in and hauled surplus out. In 1869 the ribbon of steel crossing the continent came to a reality at Promontory Point, Utah. This put the first railroad center in the whole Utah Territory at Corinne, Utah. Wagon freighting to and from Corinne was a major industry for a short while, hauling goods far into Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. Later, in 1870, railroad lines were run into Salt Lake Valley and other surrounding valleys. The railroad came to Cache Valley in 1872.

With its commercial activities, knitting mills, fine dairy herds, and an abundance of choice fruits and vegetables, Cache Valley sent out its surplus. One way of distributing these goods was by the age old itinerant method. A wagon load at a time selling door to door. Thus goods and services went out of Cache Valley and were also brought into the Valley. As mentioned in the Introduction, Cache Valley was served by three types of peddlers: those who lived in Cache Valley, those who came in from Ogden and Salt Lake, and those who came from other parts of the nation. Chapter V deals with goods and services made available to Utahns in the northern part of the state, and of the surplus they sent out through the itinerant trade. In many respects, peddling in Utah was a continuation of what had been done in early North America.

Fruits

In and around Cache Valley fruit and produce were the main items peddled. More farmers and summer peddlers were involved in this type than any other. Some farmers peddled their own crops, while others made it a full-time summer job. The main trade was from Brigham City and Cache Valley to the Bear Lake region: Woodruff, Randolph, Montpelier, Cokeville, Kemmerer and Star Valley. The season started with the first strawberries, cherries in the early summer and ended in the fall with peaches, tomatoes, pears and squash.

Joseph Olsen gives a clear picture of the peddling of fruits and vegetables into the Bear Lake area. Mr. Olsen returned from the First World War to a section of the United States with little employment. Almost by accident he started into the peddling business. Quickly he realized he could make in a week peddling what other young men were making in a month at wages. He bought a Peter Shefler Wagon with a three foot deep box with springs. It had bows and cover and could haul about 2,000 pounds. In a typical run he would leave Hyrum (his home) and arrive in Brigham the first night. The following day he loaded and returned to Hyrum and the third day took him to the Hardware Ranch area. Fourth day found him around Bear Lake going door to door. He returned to Hyrum and deposited the cash to cover the checks he had written in Brigham to pay for the fruit. "Things are different now," Mr. Olsen commented with a grin.[1]

---

[1] Joseph Olsen, interviewed in Hyrum, Utah, December 11, 1965.

He started with strawberries, raspberries, cherries, dewberries and apricots. Then as the season progressed he hauled tomatoes, summer apples, lots of corn, cantaloupes, and a few melons. He finished the season with tomatoes, peaches and apples. The fruit was picked and cased by the farmer. Other items hauled at times were Potawattamie Plums, cucumbers, eggplant, squash, and other vegetables. Profit was 90¢ to $1.00 a case. Much of the corn, apples and berries were raised by Mr. Olsen, thus giving him a steady market for his product. He said, "I made a good living because there was a demand. People waited for my goods." They were glad to have him come and bring the much needed fruits and vegetables, both for table use and for canning. Mr. Olsen said, "The people waited for me and were very friendly. I made close acquaintances and would like some time to retrace my steps and visit with my old customers if any of them are still alive."[1] Many offered him a room but he preferred to "sleep under the stars."

The business was so profitable that in 1924 he bought a new truck for $720, and paid for it the first summer he used it. With team and wagon he made a trip a week but with the truck he could make two. Using the truck presented a new problem, however. With team and wagon a few people asked at times if they could go to Randolph and visit their friends, or a family would ask if they could ride from Star Valley to Logan to go to the Temple or visit their family. This did not get out of hand with the wagon. There was the slowness of it, the camping out and dusty roads, but with the truck it was different. They could make the trip in a day,

---

[1] Olsen.

no camping, and a much smoother ride. Mothers with four or five children often asked if they could ride to Logan with him (as from Afton, Wyoming). He had to stop for "drinks," "go to the bathroom," "I dropped my hanky," or similar cries from the children. In fact, so many people asked for rides, he had to discontinue all of it. It was also not uncommon for a housewife or farmer to ask Mr. Olsen to bring on his next trip a bolt of cloth, a pair of shoes, a pitch-fork, wagon hub, teeth for a harrow, or some other item.[1]

The following is an interesting account of fruit peddling experiences related by Mr. Marlin Anhder. As he related his experience, he seemed happy and reminiscent. This reveals that Mr. Anhder must have enjoyed his youth and his experiences with those who were road-lovers of the past. He recalled experiences of seeing and selling to the peddlers.

Conrad, his father, bought three sawmills from the United Order just before the turn of the century. They harvested the evergreens growing between the Wasatch Front and the Bear Lake area. The trees were felled, trimmed on the spot, and dragged by ox team to the steam powered sawmills. Here the trees were sawed into rough planks, boards, siding, or some were split to make shakes and shingles. This drew business from both Cache Valley and Bear Lake. The people came up with their teams and wagons to buy what lumber they needed for homes and barns.

His father also had bees and some fruit in Hyrum. With these two businesses they became involved in the peddling trade. As the Anhder boys were working in the mountains, they could see the Bear Lakers coming up

---

[1]Olsen.

the canyons with their empty wagons going for a load of fruit and honey. Many times Marlin solicited business by stopping the wagons and referring them to their home in Hyrum for fruit and honey. This channeled a lot of business their way which made it necessary for some of the boys to remain home and raise more fruit.

The bulk of the trade was done by the peddlers, but in the fall of the year a few of the families from Bear Lake and Rich counties got together and accumulated fruit orders, usually enough to fill a wagon. Then one or two men from the group would drive their teams and wagon to Hyrum and Brigham City for fruit for canning and enough honey to last the winter. No doubt these families had been buying small quantities from the peddlers during the summer for table use, but when it came time for fall canning they could haul their own cheaper. The route most commonly taken was the Danish Dugway: from Laketown, up the canyon to Round Valley, past Dry Lake, through Strawberry Valley and down into Rock Creek, up the hill then drop into Curtis Creek and finally into the Hardware Ranch. This usually constituted one day's travel of about twenty-five miles. Sometimes they made it a ways down Blacksmith Fork Canyon. It took the biggest part of the next day to travel the remaining eighteen miles into Hyrum. With a good team, an early start, and driving until late at night, some made the trip in one day (although it was uncommon).[1]

Many of these "do-it-yourselfers" came right to the Anhder farm where they pastured their horses, put in their fruit orders and at time built their campfires not far from the barn and slept in the hay loft at

---

[1]Marlin Anhder, interviewed in Hyrum, Utah, April 16, 1964.

night. Next morning they hitched up and continued on to Brigham City for peaches, cantaloupes and other fruits. The trip to Brigham took one full day and they returned on the second. In Hyrum again, they loaded on apples, tomatoes, plums and honey. They hauled from thirty to fifty bushels of fruit and a few sixty pound cans of honey. The four or five day travelers headed home with one to one and a half tons of produce and honey. Returning up Blacksmith Fork Canyon they camped again at the Hardware Ranch. Another day found them at Round Valley, or by driving late they made it to Laketown. The following day, those not living in Laketown, went on to Pickleville, Garden City, Lakota, Utah, Fish Haven, St. Charles, or Montpelier, Idaho. Turning east, some went to Randolph or Woodruff. The next few days there was plenty of fresh fruit to eat until it was bottled fresh or put up as a preserve.

Mr. Anhder remembers one fall a man came from Bear Lake alone. It was late in the fall and when he returned from Brigham City with part of his load a severe storm set in and prevented his return home. He stayed at the Anhder home until the storm was spent. He wrote a letter to his family in Laketown and asked them to make arrangements for wagons to meet him on the summit on a specific day. The letter mailed, had to go to Logan, Utah, Preston, Soda Springs, Idaho and around the mountains to Montpelier, Idaho by train. It was then carried by mailman from Montpelier to Laketown. Hoping the letter had arrived on time and arrangements made, the freighter packed his fruit in straw and bedding to prevent freezing, and with the help of two borrowed teams, started up Blacksmith Fork Canyon through the deep snow. It was found out later that after two days ~~to~~ hard pulling, he made it to the summit where two wagons and men were waiting to help him down the other side. The snow was

so deep the wagon axles pushed the snow as snow plows. The extra team of horses was turned loose and returned to Hyrum unaided the following day.

About 1910 Heber Jenson, Marlin Anhder, and a companion, loaded a train car with six-hundred bushels of apples and tomatoes. The ends of the car were filled with ice, and it was shipped to McCammon, Idaho. The three men followed in a Model "T" Ford. The train car was opened at McCammon and about one-hundred bushel of apples and tomatoes were peddled. In Logan the tomatoes were selling for 25¢ to 35¢ a bushel. (The baskets to ship the produce cost that much.) In McCammon the tomatoes sold for as much as $1.50 a bushel. The car was then shipped to Soda Springs, Idaho where more was sold. It finished in Montpelier, Idaho. The exact profit has since been forgotten but Mr. Anhder said it proved to be a worthwhile venture.[1]

In 1911, Ezra Wickham moved from Dayton, Idaho, to Honeyville, Utah. His brother-in-law had been called on a mission for the Latter-day Saint Church so Ezra and his wife moved to Honeyville to take over the farm during the owner's absence. Most of the farm was in fruit trees. When the fruit ripened there was no market for it. The immediate vicinity also grew fruit and those who didn't, their orders were soon filled. Mr. Wickham was concerned as to what to do with the fruit. He then recalled the fruit shortage in the part of Idaho he was from. The crop was mostly peaches so he peddled them as far north as Clarkston, Utah and Dayton, Idaho. If he had a few extra melons he took these along and sold also.

---

[1] Anhder.

He used a team and wagon with bows and cover. The cover kept some of the dust off and kept the sun from the peaches. At times the whole family went and made sort of a camping trip out of it. It took three days to make the round trip. One day up, one for peddling and one for the return trip. Mr. Wickham seems to have done very well. By living in Southern Idaho he knew the fruit shortage and by going there he found others desiring fruit just as he previously had. Some bought what they could afford. Others asked him to bring more. In fact, the fruit sold so well he bought peaches from his brother-in-law's farm for 25¢ a bushel and sold them in Idaho door to door for $1.00 a bushel. The fresh fruit was a much wanted and needed product.

The Indians came quite often to the Ezra Wickham farm and begged fruit. They were given the privilege of picking the fruit up off the ground in the orchards. It seems as though they never picked the fruit from the trees directly (as far as the owner knew), but they certainly shook the trees so more fruit would fall.[1]

A famous figure in the itinerant trade from around 1890 to 1921 was Mrs. Mary J. Checketts. Mrs. Checketts made full use of their twenty-five acre farm located in Providence. She peddled fruits and vegetables to Logan and the surrounding towns. Some of the produce raised on the farm was peas, radishes, onions, tomatoes, squash and cucumbers; also currants, cherries, pie cherries, strawberries and raspberries. Twenty quarts of cheeries sold for $1.00 and ten or twelve quarts of raspberries for $1.00. The prices of other produce is not known. Mr. William Checketts, a son, could not remember the prices. She not only peddled

---

[1]Hans C. Hansen, interviewed in Logan, Utah, October 26 1965.

door to door, but also obtained some business from the local stores. She used a small Ludlow (buckboard) wagon pulled with one horse. It is reported that she helped keep her family of seven. In fact, her son, William, claims she made a good half of the family's living by peddling door to door.[1] Mrs. Checketts also sold medicines of her own making on a money-back guarantee. This will be mentioned and explained later on under the topic of medicine.

A Mrs. Zbinden from Logan also sold garden vegetables door to door with horse and buggy. She was from Logan and traveled out very similar to the way Mrs. Checketts did. She likewise helped provide for her family with this income.[2]

Mrs. George L. Jones of Logan also peddled raspberries. She sold them, twelve quarts for $1.00.[3] It is reported she built up quite a business. In fact, her trips took her as far north as Downey and Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. Traveling this far, she no doubt stayed a few nights, but nothing more could be discovered on her.

The late L. K. Wood of Mendon, well-known mechanic and restorer of antique farm machiner, said, "Mainly peddlers came through with peaches."[4] One Danishman, he recalled, traded a bushel of peaches for a bushel of wheat. Both were worth about $1.00 a bushel, but in Ogden he could get the dollar for the wheat and this is where he made his money. Mr. Wood also remembered that many fish peddlers came through. These peddled the

---

[1]William Checketts, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 18, 1965.

[2]Hyrum Naylor, interviewed in Logan, Utah, October 25, 1965.

[3]Ibid.

[4]L. K. Wood, interviewed in Mendon, Utah, October 27, 1965.

Mullett from Bear Lake.[1]

When Albert Ethan Allen was a young man, around 1900, he peddled raspberries, eggs and butter over the hill to Eden, Liberty and Huntsville, Utah. He was from Providence and worked south.[2]

Clara Merz, while a young girl, went with her father on some of his peddling trips. She recalled as a young girl, going to Brigham for a load of fruit. They camped in Brigham Canyon over-night and loaded the next day. They slept on the ground and her father cooked over an open campfire. Many loads of melons, peaches, and pears were taken to the Bear Lake region and peddled door to door.[3]

At times men in Brigham City, Hyrum or even Bear Lake bought loads of apricots or peaches in Brigham City, apples, tomatoes, and pears from Hyrum, and peddled them door to door for a small profit. Peaches sold for $1.00 to $1.25 per bushel.[4]

Two brothers, John L. and Joseph L. Glenn peddled at the turn of the century. John hauled fruit from Brigham to the Logan area and over into Bear Lake. It was common in the early summer to haul fruit over and bring back a load of fish. "Fish was very popular and sold two for 25¢."[5]

John and Emma were married in 1907 and settled down, partially. John worked on the big threshing machines in season and when it was over went

---

[1]Wood.

[2]Albert Ethan Allen, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 14, 1965.

[3]Letter from Clara Merz to author, dated May 20, 1964, Los Angeles, California.

[4]John Godfrey, interviewed in Clarkston, Utah, October 10, 1965.

[5]Emma Glenn, interviewed in Wellsville, Utah, December ., 1965.

back to the road. Mrs. Glenn commented on how much her husband enjoyed a good team. "He always kept a good team. He liked to get out."[1] It seems as though they both liked to get out. Often Mrs. Glenn went with him. One day took them to Brigham City, Utah for the fruit, and the next night found them a ways up Blacksmith Fork Canyon. Mr. Glenn watered and grained the horses while Mrs. Glenn prepared supper. Later she said they sat around the campfire watching the hot coals of the fire. They them climbed into the wagon to sleep. Next morning they broke camp and went on into Bear Lake. "The people were just crazy to get the fresh fruit." Asking her why they peddled, she answered very quickly, "For a living."[2] She said her husband peddled from 1910 almost to the thirtys. She could not remember exactly.

Mr. John Godfrey of Clarkston, Utah, remembered a man by the name of Three Horse Pete. He used three horses to pull his wagon. He traveled about selling load after load of fruit from Brigham City and Logan areas to surrounding settlements.[3] He also remembered that a man from the Logan area peddled salt in Clarkston, but could not recall the name or price. He said most of the salt was traded for food products.[4]

A Mr. Sorenson from Lakota claims it was common to haul fruit all the way to Star Valley, Wyoming. Peaches and tomatoes sold in Star Valley for about $2.00 a bushel. Quite often the fruit itinerants brought

---

[1] Glenn.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Godfrey.

[4] Ibid.

back a calf or two. This helped in making the trip pay. He said some trips they made money, other times broke even or even went "in the hole."[1]

A Big Jens from Hyrum peddled fruit all over the valley.[2]

As late as the 1930's Mr. John Buckley drove his car to Brigham City and brought back what fruit he could. He then had his children run door to door selling orders. Uncle John Buckley (this is the name he was referred as) came along later and delivered the fruit.[3]

It seems that because of the early frosts in the fall and the late frosts in the spring, Wellsville was more limited to the type of crops raised, more so than in Hyrum or Logan. Wellsville tended to raise the more hardy crops which were traded for fruits in the other warmer towns.[4]

Albert Ethan Allen of Providence also gives the same story. He claimed goods were often traded between towns. He stated that Wellsville could not grow some of the garden vegetables the other communities could, so they raised the hardier crops such as cabbage and wheat. These crops were traded for vegetables of other towns, fruit and vegetables from Hyrum, molasses from Millville and clothes from Bensonville (Logan).[5] Often this trading was done by local peddlers.

---

[1]Mr. Sorenson (would not give first name), interviewed at Lakota, Bear Lake, Utah, October 21, 1965.

[2]Emil Gessel, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 18, 1965.

[3]Naylor.

[4]Elizabeth Yeates, interviewed in Nibley, Utah, November 2, 1965.

[5]Allen.

Of interest here is the "highwayman" who robbed and plundered the fruit peddlers. At bridge crossings or where the road passed thick clumps of trees, young boys would secretly sneak out and climb into the back of a wagon. Here they quickly helped themselves to the fruits. Then climbed out undetected.[1]

Once in awhile a boy or two would get the peddler's attention in front, thus, he being occupied, the remainder of the group climbed into the wagon and helped themselves likewise.[2]

Those interviewed claimed this was on a small scale and did not get out of hand.

In closing the fruit and vegetable section, the best way to summarize would be to quote Elizabeth Yeates. This was her comment many years after the fruit peddlers called at her home. "What a sight it was to look into the back of a wagon of a fruit peddler and see the fresh melons, apples, peaches and pears."[3]

Fish and Meats

A common commodity peddled in this region was fish. Peddling of fish is not unique, it has been done for centuries in many parts of the world. The author's father-in-law, while living on the East Coast remembers many street peddlers calling "shad roll, shad roll."[4] Richardson

---

[1]Evan B. Murray, interviewed in Logan, Utah, September 28, 1964.

[2]Godfrey.

[3]Elizabeth Yeates.

[4]Claude A. Ellis, interviewed in North Ogden, Utah, January 17, 1967.

Wright in his book mentions all type of fish sold on the East Coast. Around the world today fish peddling is still common. But fish peddling in Northern Utah, Western Wyoming, and South-eastern Idaho was unique. The reason for its uniqueness was that this area was so far from an ocean.

What made this possible was Bear Lake, a lake lying half in Utah, Rich County and half in Idaho, Bear Lake County. The fish was the Bear Lake Mullet. It was commonly called a sucker and is a very bony fish. The author has eaten (tasted) them. He writes tasted, because they are so very bony and hard to eat. Nevertheless, many people looked forward for spring and the fish peddler.

The Bear Lake Mullet when full grown weighs about two pounds. They are round and have a sucker-type mouth. Suckers are a trash fish and not considered for food or as a game fish. This is no doubt why some referred to them as "mullet" and would not call them suckers, thinking they were two different fish.

In the spring fish peddlers traveled by team and wagon to Bear Lake for a load of fish. The suckers were seined (netted) usually on the east side of the lake. These fish gather in large schools close to shore. (The author has driven in spring and early summer around Bear Lake. The mullet are easily seen a few feet from the shore.) In those days if one wanted (and some did), they could drive around to the east shores and purchase freshly caught suckers for 1½¢ apiece. Most of the fish though were peddled door to door. A great deal of this fish sold in Cache Valley. Many peddlers kept the fish cold by utilizing ice from Bear Lake or ponds that froze over, between Bear Lake and Logan. As long as the ice was available, fresh fish were hauled into Cache Valley and surrounding areas.

Most of the fish sold fresh at two for 25¢. They weighed about two pounds apiece so actually the buyer got four pounds of fresh fish for a quarter. Sometimes they were salted down and placed in wooden barrels. A layer of salt was placed in the bottom of the barrel. Then a layer of fish was added and another layer of salt. This was repeated until the barrel was filled and a lid was placed on top. This was the only way to preserve them for any length of time. Before they could be eaten, the salted fish were soaked in fresh water overnight. This drew some of the salt out and made them edible.

The author has heard his father tell of when he was a young boy living in Huntsville, Utah, how they at times with team and wagon went to Bear Lake for fish. They caught their own fish and salted them down in a wooden barrel. This was part of their winter's supply of meat. He said, "They were extremely bony, but certainly tasty and a change of diet."[1] People came as far away as Ogden and Salt Lake with barrels and salt in which to take home a good supply of fish. Fish preserved in this manner were also peddled.

Early in the spring the fish peddlers pulled their loads up the east side of the mountain range heading west towards the Hardware Ranch. Leaving the ranch they drove their teams down the Blacksmith Fork Canyon into Cache Valley. Here they were peddled house to house. Mrs. Elizabeth Yeates of Nibley recalled the fish peddlers. She claims her mother bought a whole pan full of fish for 25¢. She said, "We got so tired of

---

[1] Clyde V. Nye, interviewed in North Ogden, Utah, January 15, 1966.

pork and we needed and wanted a change and a fresh meat."[1]

The majority of people interviewed said they did remember the fish peddler but could not remember any of their names. Only the names of two men who peddled fish are available. They were Joseph Glenn of Wellsville[2] and Clara Merz' father, Oscar Liljenquist.[3]

Mrs. William Checketts commented that in the spring the salt man also took to peddling fish from Bear Lake. "He was as regular as spring. In fact," she said, "I still like them."[4]

Mrs. Clara Merz writes:

> My father and brother would go to Bear Lake and get fish (suckers) mostly which they sold. I cannot say that I enjoyed eating the Suckers very much because of the many bones in them. We were too busy hunting for the bones to enjoy the fish. They were not as good as trout but still a good fish that sold well.[5]

John Godfrey made the statement about the Bear Lake Mullet (he drove over and bought them himself for a cent and a half apiece), "It was better than eating all pig meat . . . we had plenty of time to pick out the bones."[6] Along with the fish, butchered beef, pork, veal and mutton were also peddled.

---

[1] Elizabeth Yeates.

[2] Emil Gessel.

[3] Clara Merz, letter, op. cit.

[4] Mrs. William Checketts, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 18, 1965.

[5] Merz.

[6] Godfrey.

Today we here in America have things so convenient. Just recently the author went to the supermarket for meat. Every cut, grind, size, shape, type, flavor and price were available. Everything from lamb patties to barbequed fish and poultry was there for the customer. But before they had the music-filled supermarkets and the many running feet of cooled showcases, where was fresh meat obtained? There were two ways: slaughter one of your own animals or buy it fresh from a peddler. If a family slaughtered its own, three to four days in a cool pantry was the limit. Smoking, curing, and salting were the main ways of preserving meat. The author recalls the salt barrel that stood in the corner of the back porch at his home. This was after refrigeration was quite common. In the fall of the year a pork or two were butchered and cut up. A wooden barrel was half filled with water. Then his mother placed an egg in the barrel. Naturally the egg sank to the bottom. Then she began pouring in salt. It was the author's job to slowly stir it. Slowly the egg came to the top and floated like a cork. It was now salty enough and the cuts of pork were laid down in the brine. Thus the meat kept until it was finally eaten. Like the salted suckers, the pork had to soak. This is related to show one of the means of preserving meats. But as many of the people commented, they grew so tired of salt pork and smoked hams, they welcomed fresh meat. Many residents did not have beef of their own and the fresh red meat delivered to their door was very handy.

Those who peddled fresh meat did a good business. The beef was butchered one day and peddled the next. In the hot summertime, if the animal was not sold by noon, they had to cut the prices to get rid of it before it spoiled.

Peter Maughan and James Buttars slaughtered beef and peddled fresh cuts door to door around the first decade of the century. It may have sold for ten to twelve cents a pound but is not known for sure.[1] Mos Andreasen also peddled fresh meat once a week in Clarkston and nearby towns. During threshing time when twenty to thirty men were working, Mr. Andreasen made two trips a day. He said "The men worked hard and ate a lot of beef."[2]

Elmer Smith of Lakota butchered beef, pigs, and veal and peddled it around the Bear Lake area. Fresh meat sold for 8¢ to 10¢ a pound. He also peddled eggs, often trading meat for eggs and selling them on his route.[3]

Around 1900 peddlers came to Cache Valley selling small barrels of foodstuffs. The barrels were made from curved wooden staves, and held in place with small iron or brass bands. They were about twelve inches in diameter and eighteen inches high. These small wooden barrels held a variety of foods. One barrel may hold pickles, another beans or rice, dry tapioca, sego or sorgum. These were bought and laid away for the family's winter food supply.[4]

---

[1] Rosetta L. Buttars, interviewed in Clarkston, Utah, November 13, 1965.

[2] Mos Andreasen, interviewed in Logan, Utah, November 20, 1965.

[3] Mr. Sorenson.

[4] Hansen.

Dairy Products

Fruits and vegetables were the main items peddled, but following a close second was dairy products. The first account was given by the late John A. Israelsen in Hyrum, Utah on May 16, 1964.

During the latter half of the 1890's Andrew Martin Israelsen owned a dairy at Sheep Creek about seven miles south-east of the Hardware Ranch, up Blacksmith Fork Canyon. Large amounts of cheese and butter were processed during the summer months, and peddled throughout Cache Valley and into Ogden Valley and even into Ogden. In early spring male members of the Israelsen family were found as far away as Clarkston, Utah, collecting a cow or two from the local farmers and herding them to the grassy meadows of Sheep Creek. Mr. Israelsen then solicited young women, sixteen to seventeen years of age, and moved them to the dairy to milk cows and make the dairy products. Asking why they hired girls instead of boys, he stated, "They were better workers and less expensive." Ten to eighteen girls went to the dairy every spring and stayed until the cows were returned home in the fall. They brought their own bedrolls and were furnished meals and sleeping quarters. Each girl was assigned a certain number of cows to milk morning and night, plus certain chores pertaining to the making and curing of cheese and butter. They were paid $1.50 to $2.50 a week.

After each milking, the milk was poured into long wooden troughs and mixed with rennet. Curds formed and the whey was drained off. The new cheese was packed into cheese hoops and placed on ripening shelves twenty-five to thirty-feet long. These chunks of cheese, weighing twenty-five to thirty-five pounds, were turned daily for proper aging.

This process was repeated morning and night. The herd of 150 to 170 milch cows required a great deal of care and work.

When enough cheese was ripe and fresh sweet cream butter churned, Mr. Israelsen loaded his wagon in the evening, ready for peddling in Huntsville, Eden, Liberty, and possibly Ogden, during the next few days. The cheese and butter was kept cool by placing green willow branches over the dairy products and then placing wet burlap over the willows. Early morning until late in the afternoon took them over Ant Flat, down the south fork of the Ogden River, and into Ogden Valley. Here at Huntsville, Eden and Liberty the products were peddled door to door. The cheese sold from 9¢ to 10¢ a pound, and butter 12¢ to 14¢ a pound. Regular customers were established and looked forward to the delivery of these much desired products. At times the cheese and butter were traded for eggs, which were sold at other doors, or returned to the ranch for use there, or peddled in Cache Valley. Dairy products were also peddled by Mr. Israelsen and sons to Hyrum, Providence, Wellsville, Logan, Smithfield, and so on catching most of the small communities in Cache Valley.

In the fall of the year the cows were turned and the use of them was paid for in cheese and butter. A daily production chart was kept for each animal and the owners paid accordingly. The hired girls also returned to their homes. It may be of worth here to mention that young men from the Valley came to the dairy often and visited with the hired girls on Sunday. It was common to see the young couples visiting, hiking, or horseback riding.

With the large amount of skim milk, buttermilk, and whey, many a hog was fattened for the slaughterhouse. It was not uncommon to drive thirty to forty head of pigs up Blacksmith Fork Canyon to be fattened

on the dairy's by-products. It was an all day drive (early morning until dark) to herd the swine up the eighteen mile canyon, stopping now and then to rest under the willows.

Just before the turn of the century the Israelsen Dairy was moved from Sheep Creek to the present site of the Hardware Ranch (which received its name from the Hardware Company of Brigham City, owned by Peter Madsen and Son). It was while living at the Hardware Ranch that the Israelsen family became acquainted with the fruit and fish peddlers on their way to and from Bear Lake and vicinity. From the first fruit and vegetables in the early summer to the first solid freeze, the peddler's white wagon tops and smoke from their campfires could be seen all up and down the canyon.[1]

To show the amount of travel this canyon did receive, a toll gate was placed at the mouth of Blacksmith's Fork Canyon leading to Bear Lake. The residents of Hyrum were put in charge of it. The rate was 50¢ per vehicle for a round trip, 35¢ one way and 15¢ for horseback. From 1873 to 1890 (17 years) the receipts amounted to $18,000.[2]

At times peddlers stopped at the Israelsen Dairy for horse feed and pasture for the night. They could also obtain a hearty meal at the dairy for 25¢ to 35¢. Frequently they bought cheese and you'd hear, "Nope, too mild. Nope, that's too mild. That's the one, that's good and nippy. I'll take some of that."[3]

---

[1]John A. Israelsen, interviewed in Hyrum, Utah, May 16, 1964.

[2]Willis A. Dial (compiler) "Chronological Survey of Activities Within Cache Valley to 1884," 1949-50. In possession of author.

[3]Israelsen.

Father Israelsen gave John A. an assignment to assist the fruit peddlers. From the ranch to the top of the Danish Dugway (about eight miles) was a long steep grade. John's job was to harness the horse, Nancy, and help pull the one to two tons of produce to the summit. The peddlers paid $1.50 for each trip up. Most of the peddlers were farmers themselves, and the only way to sell their crop was peddling door to door.[1]

Of interest here is the Theurer Dairy in Logan Canyon. In 1885 John M. Theurer began grazing beef in Providence Canyon. John's father, Frederick Theurer, about that time, bought a Holstein bull from the L.D.S. Church and brought him to Providence. In the spring of 1887 the dairy stock and bull was moved to a summer range in Logan Canyon. This is reported to be the first grazing in Logan Canyon by white men. The dairy was located at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Hollow, about one-half mile up from the old Boy Scout Lodge. There were about thirty to forty head of milch cows and a large number of horses and range cattle and a few hogs.

Later this dairy was moved to a site about one-half mile below the bridge leading into the old C.C.C. Camp. Here, because of the demand, the dairy herd was increased from forty to eighty cows. Some of these also were rented from farmers in the Valley and taken on a share profit basis. This dairy likewise had dairy maids. The entire herd was milked by these girls who also cared for the milk, cream and butter. Each day they churned twenty to twenty-five pounds of butter. Some of this butter,

---

[1] Israelsen.

along with milk, cream and fresh beef were marketed right there in the canyon. The main market was in Salt Lake City. The butter was molded in one pound rolls, wrapped in cheese cloth and packed in heavy wooden refrigerated boxes. Ice was added to the center for refrigeration. Each icebox held about forty pounds of butter and each week a wagon train delivered its load to Logan for shipment to Salt Lake. Ice was hauled up the canyon on the return trip and stored in sawdust in the cellar. Butter sold for about 20¢ a pound in those days. The nearby sawmills paid in script, but the dairy received cash from the Salt Lake markets.

These girls likewise had friends visit them at the dairy on weekends. Many a happy Sunday afternoon was spent horseback riding, fishing, hunting or camping.

This industry prospered for eight years, then came the sheep and more cattle and soon the area was over-grazed and the dairy discontinued its operation. Since that time beef cattle and sheep have taken over the grazing in Logan Canyon.[1]

One person interviewed stated that the Bear Lake area also made a lot of cheese. The climate was not well suited for fruits so they went into dairy and cattle raising. They produced a lot of cheese which was traded for fruit, vegetables and honey in Logan, Hyrum and the Brigham City area.[2]

Many families in those early days had their own milch cows, but still many did not and dairy products have always been in demand.

---

[1]Kate B. Carter, ed., Heart Throbs of the West, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1944), V, 359-361.

[2]Gessel.

Once a week a few of the dairy farmers from Clarkston pooled their cheese and butter and sent it to Corinne, Utah to trade for shoes, cloth, sugar and other goods. Every farmer in the pool took his turn when his week came up. They left at night so the butter would not melt. In Corinne, the butter was worth about 15¢ a pound. This was done for a number of years in the 1890's.[1]

When the rich placer mines of Montana were opened, Cache Valley found a ready market for their dairy products. Along with dairy products, flour, grain, and garden produce found a ready sale. Thousands of dollars worth of foodstuffs found their way to the mines. Likewise thousands of dollars returned to Cache Valley, along with other much needed goods. Horses, wagons, and tools poured into Cache Valley in exchange for their agriculture.[2]

During the latter part of the 19th Century there were seven coal mines in operation between Woodruff, Utah and Evanston, Wyoming. Many peddled fruits, vegetables and dairy products to the miners there.[3]

Even as far back as 1863 when Colonel Conner came into Cache Valley, the pioneers would "rush to the square with butter, eggs, milk and such things" to be traded for blankets and other articles of clothing.[4]

---

[1] Godfrey.

[2] Willard Conrad Jenson, History of Logan, 43. M. A. Thesis, 1927. Utah State University, Special Collections.

[3] Martha Bryson, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 18, 1965.

[4] Jensen, 42.

Salt and Ice Cream

John Yeates recalls as a youth that every Sunday morning a Mr. James from Millville peddled ice cream. A small bell announced his coming. "Big" cones sold for 5¢.[1]

Another local peddler and one who did a good business was the salt peddler. One of the known salt peddlers was Martin J. Neilson. He was known as "The Salt Man." He used a team and wagon and journeyed down to the shores of Great Salt Lake. Filling his wagon, he returned to Cache Valley. He hauled it to Nibley where he had a small salt mill. The mill was operated by one horse walking in a circle. Mr. Neilson had devised a machanical whip to prod the horse at intervals to keep him going. The salt he peddled was used for cattle, ice cream freezers and table use. Salt for the table was ground very fine.[2]

How colorful it must have been to see the small wagon approaching and to hear the tinkling of the bell used by Mr. Neilson to advertise his coming. He used a small set of steps which enabled him to climb easily into the back of his wagon. There he had a small scale with which to weigh out the desired amount of salt.[3] It had been difficult to find out how much salt sold for. Mrs. Charles C. Anderson from whom this information was collected could not recall the price of salt. Mrs.

---

[1] John B. Yeates, interviewed in Nibley, Utah, November 2, 1965.

[2] Mrs. Charles C. Anderson, interviewed in Millville, Utah, October 20, 1965.

[3] Ibid.

Elizabeth Yeates said the salt sold for 25¢ to 30¢ a fifty pound bag.[1]

Martin J. Neilson, "The Salt Man," in his last years was asked by his children if they could take his picture and have a write-up about him in the paper. They felt that it would be of interest to many to read of his peddling experiences. When his family approached him for a picture he said, "No, they will take my picture /which was to appear in the paper/ and use it in the outhouse and I don't want that."[2] He stopped selling around 1905.

Marshal Allen from Paradise went to the "Salt Mines" by Great Salt Lake and staked off a small plot. He cut large chunks of salt and hauled them to Paradise. The chunk salt was used as it was for cattle. The smaller salt was used for making ice cream and still other was ground more fine for table salt. Mr. Allen peddled his salt throughout Cache Valley, around the 1890's and early 1900's. If memory does not betray Mr. Allen, he thinks the salt sold for about 50¢ a fifty pound bag.[3]

Honey was peddled by a few but so many had their own hives there was not a big market.

Books

Book peddlers were fairly common around 1890 to 1915.[4] The railroads reached many areas by the 1890's which made the shipment of books

---

[1]Elizabeth Yeates.

[2]Anderson.

[3]Allen.

[4]Hansen.

much cheaper and faster. Many book peddlers made quite a nuisance of themselves. At times when the peddler was seen coming the members of the household hid, so as to escape his visit. But even though they were at times a nuisance, the books were enjoyed by many. Most book peddlers were not from Cache Valley. A few came from Salt Lake and Ogden, but the majority came in on the train from the East or the West Coasts. These out-siders came in, hired a small wagon or buggy and hit the outlying areas of a larger community. They went out from towns such as Provo, Ogden, and Logan.

In the outlying areas the books were enjoyed very much especially if the book seller let the prospective buyer browse and look.

Mary Beckstead, while a young girl, lived a few miles from Provo. Many book sellers came around. She claimed books were very scarce and they were so happy to have the bookman stop.[1]

Elizabeth Yeates remembered the bookman also. She claims there were so many they became a nuisance, although "the books were enjoyed by many."[2]

Book agents came through Cache Valley in the early 1900's asking young people to sell for them. One particular salesman knocked at door and asked a young lady to buy his book for $5.00, and then wanted her to sell it around town. She would get the book free and a small commission. Her mother felt this would be a chance for a little employment, which was needed badly right then. The last $5.00 in the house purchased the book and the daughter began covering the town. She found the salesman had done the same thing to others in the community. She could not sell

[1] Mary Beckstead, interviewed in Nibley, Utah, November 2, 1965.

[2] Elizabeth Yeates.

the book and the last $5.00 in the house was gone.[1]

One gimmick to sell encyclopedias was to put a small land deed along with the books. Book sellers from the West Coast sold a small lot with each set of encyclopedias. All was legal, the deed was authentic. The land was just a short ways from Long Beach, California and "would be a nice place to build and retire in their old age." Actually it was near Long Beach, but it was waste land in those days. The waste land, later, turned out to be Signal Hill and oil was discovered on it. Some who had bought small lots later sold them for as much as $3000.[2]

Clothes

Shortly after the turn of the century John A. Israelsen obtained a contract from the Cache Knitting Mills to sell knitted goods in Northern Utah, Idaho, and Montana. He traveled by rail from Logan to Pocatello, Idaho, and to Billings, Anaconda, and Butte, Montana. He traveled door to door. His companion, Archie Graham, and he would call at a home and make an appointment to meet when the men folk were home. At the appointed time they displayed their goods, made the sales, measured for size, took orders, and received a small deposit. These orders were mailed to Logan to be filled. The sales constituted mostly men's black or gray all-wool underwear, with some black and white sweaters for the women. Most business was done with miners and railroad workers. One evening they walked into a saloon in Butte, Montana. With the aid of two of the largest men

---

[1] Merz.

[2] Hansen.

pulling on the garment, they proved the garments were of good quality and long wearing. As a result of this test they sold many orders that night. Those in the mines preferred black underwear as it would not show the dirt. The underwear sold for thirteen to fourteen dollars a pair.

In Pocatello, Idaho at one time Mr. Israelsen took the measurements of a young lady for a knitted sweater. She paid a small deposit and he continued down the street selling. A few minutes later a shot was heard. Mr. Israelsen and Mr. Graham retraced their steps to the home of the young lady who had ordered the sweater. She lay in a pool of blood, dead. Her husband had come home, heard what she had done, and shot her on the spot. Not slowly, they left the neighborhood.[1]

With the two or three dollar deposit, Cache Knitting Mills sent the garment parcel post C.O.D. If the customer could not afford the balance or did not want the article, it was returned, the small deposit paid the postage and trouble. In good times the peddler made eight to ten dollars a day.[2]

Peddlers came out of Ogden and Salt Lake during the summer with a good stock of cloth, lace needles, pins and scissors. One particular itinerant was working Clarkston, Utah. He called at the home of Rosetta Buttars and told her he had some very fine cloth on sale. Rosetta bought enough for a dress and that Sunday her daughter wore it to Sunday School. A neighbor came up to Mrs. Buttars and said "That damned old peddler been

---

[1] Israelsen.

[2] Ibid.

to your place too?" She had made the same dress for her daughter.[1]

Oscar Liljenquist, father of Clara Merz, sold knitwear for the Barron Woolen Mills of Brigham City. He traveled by horse and buggy and pretty well covered Idaho and Montana. His daughter claims there was a good market and his goods sold well. He stayed with many people who treated him and fed him well. This was in the early 1900's.[2]

Simon Kohler peddler L.D.S. garments around 1918-1920. He also sold itinerantly for the Barron Woolen Mills out of Brigham City, Utah. He used a small one-horse buggy and went door to door. He hailed from Providence and his son said he may have made two to three dollars a day.[3]

Hyrum Naylor peddled rubber goods in the 1920's. He sold rubber aprons (which sold well around canning time), sponges, covers and rubber floor mats. He claims to have made about $2.50 per day.[4]

A little incident which might be appropriate here is the story of when Mr. Naylor was chased by a dog. He was at a front porch and had just knocked. No one answered. He was ready to knock again when out of the corner of his eye he saw a large dog making a vicious attack. Mr. Naylor quickly opened the screen door, then the front door and stepped into the house without waiting for an invitation. The screen door no sooner closed when the dog hit it going full speed. The dog smashed through the screen wire and was soon standing in the room occupied by

---

[1] Buttars.

[2] Merz.

[3] Fred Kohler, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 20, 1965.

[4] Naylor.

Mr. Naylor. He ran through the house with all the speed he had and out the back door. On his way out he had mind enough to slam not only the screen door shut, but the back door as well. This stopped the angry canine, but Mr. Naylor did not stop until he had crossed the back yard and was safely on another street.[1]

Quite a number of local people sold silk stockings, silverware, books, brand name goods; just about anything that would sell. Anything they could make a little on to keep their families. Two hard times, right after the First World War and during the depression, people sold anything they could to support their families.[2]

More up to date, in 1936 Glen McGregor left Logan in a 1933 Plymouth and headed towards Rock Springs, Wyoming. He had two suitcases filled with samples., one with a leather jacket, blankets, sweaters and hose. The other contained knitted dresses and rayon and wool blend knits. He sold out of Ogden for the Intermountain Knitting Mills. He said, "Many college boys worked their way through college at two hundred to three hundred dollars a summer by selling." They sold out of Salt Lake City, Ogden and Logan. This was mainly before and after the depression. During the depression times were hard and few people made enough to put much in clothes.

Mr. McGregor used the college scholarship pitch. First day out he made $20 profit. He said, "He was very happy and pleased with himself."[3]

---

[1]Naylor.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Glen McGregor, interviewed in Logan, Utah, October 15, 1965.

He had grown tired of farm work and as a farm-hand had made about $25 a month. Now he was out on his own and had made $20 the first day. Once he sat up his display in the doorway of a very fashionable store in New York. He and his companion were readily moved, but not before they had shown enough goods to take some orders. He had small dolls with his samples on. If a lady came out of a store without a package he stopped her and showed her his goods. In 1938 his selling job made him $6000. He sold to beauty operators, telephone operators, nurses and sales clerks. These were the ones who had steady incomes during the depression, and about the only ones who kept him in business.[1]

The selling trade was not all peaches and cream for Mr. McGregor and partner. One particular time their funds were so low and business so poor they spent their last 30¢ for breakfast and then went to living off green apples. At night they slept in their car and cleaned up in gas stations. This lasted until they sold a dress and received a $10 down payment.[2]

Medicine, Eye Doctors and Dentists

Like early America, Cache Valley also had hawkers of medicines. There were medicine men, herb peddlers, traveling dentists and eye doctors. There were two main types of medicine itinerants that worked Cache Valley: one group, those who came from other parts of the state or nation, these were genuine medicine men; they who used the brightly colored wagon,

---

[1] McGregor.

[2] Ibid.

gasoline torches and had a big speil, they were outsiders. They were the ones who had big crowds turn out just for the entertainment.

The other type of medicine peddler was the local or near local person. These were the ones who made their own homemade medicines and as a rule peddled them in a quiet, respectful fashion. They did not put on a show or any slight of hand tricks, they did not draw a crowd. They went door to door and a few did not collect if the patient was not cured or eased.

Another name for medicine peddlers was Kicka-poos. These were outsiders on their way through the valley. Handbills were passed out; sometimes a barker would hit the town first and spread the word of a "doctor."[1]

Now in early days in the Church the meetinghouse was the gathering place and this is where the medicine men also went. The actual selling of the medicine was preceeded by a side-show or a slight of hand performance. This was to attract the people. Before the days of movies, radio or television, this was a great form of entertainment and many turned out just for the show. After the performance the medicine was brought out and its healing powers elaborated upon in great detail. Pills, linaments, salves, tonics, and ointments might be a speciality of any medicine man. Some medicine was sold but the local people turned out mainly for the get-together and the entertainment. It was something to do.[2]

Also in the early 1900's a woman's tonic called Vi-A-Va was peddled in Cache Valley. It was guaranteed to "tone up" a woman, to make her

---

[1]Mrs. Leon C. Alder, interviewed in Providence, Utah, October 18, 1965.

[2]

"warm and glow." This sold for one dollar a bottle. By the way this woman's tonic had a very high alcohol content.[1]

The famous Watkins Products also were distributed in the area by local peddlers. Elmer Tibbets peddled this brand for years with his horse and buggy outfit. He sold just shortly after the turn of the century up until about 1919. In his goods he sold pepper, spices, flavorings, linaments. He always gave a package of chewing gum to the family on his calls whether or not they made a purchase. He built up quite a clientele by always giving a small gift. If they were extra good customers he gave some other small gift.[2]

A type of pine syrup, appropriately called "Piney" was also marketed door to door. This was to cleanse the system and tone up the body.[3]

There is no doubt that many of these medicines did tone up the body. The high alcohol content accomplished this.

Gypsies also came through the valley selling but mostly trading. "They stole more than anything else."[4] A gypsy once told Mrs. Yeates' mother (who had a huge goiter hanging on her neck) that the goiter would go away if she would give them a (beautiful and expensive) tablecloth. Undoubtedly the mother was very anxious to rid herself of such an unsightly thing so she secretly gave them the tablecloth. For years the family wondered where the prized tablecloth had disappeared to. Needless

---

[1]Hansen.

[2]Naylor.

[3]Hansen.

[4]Elizabeth Yeates.

to say, the promise did not have any effect.[1]

One of the most well-known local medicine peddlers was Mrs. Mary J. Checketts of Providence. Along with her fruits and vegetables she also peddled her own homemade remedies. Traveling in a one-horse buggy, she covered most of Cache Valley. One of her specialites was a remedy for Bright's Disease (Nephritis). Mr. William Checketts, her son, claims she had good results with her medicine. This medicine was sold on a money-back guarantee. If the patients were relieved or regained their health, she asked a nominal fee. If not helped, she never collected. She also made other home-remedies from herbs, roots, bark and leaves.[2]

"There were other traveling dentists, herb peddlers and medicine men who claimed they possessed medicines which would cure anything. These cure-alls sold quite cheap."[3]

At one home the author was explaining he was from the University. The one being interviewed said he was acquainted with many up there. At this the author asked if he knew a Dr. George Ellsworth. Quickly the man's wife spoke up and said, "Yes, I believe I remember him--wasn't he that old herb and medicine peddler?"

Eye doctors also passed through Cache Valley. Many old-timers claimed they just kept trying on different glasses until they found the pair that felt best. They mainly just magnified to help the person read better.

---

[1]Elizabeth Yeates.

[2]Mrs. William Checketts.

[3]Elizabeth Yeates.

From John Clark Dowdle's Diary we see mention of an eye doctor. "I went to Logan today for the first time in a month . . . Doctor Jones of Logan the Oculust called the evening. Ma traded him out of a pair of glasses by trading some old one."[1]

There was a Doctor Ondy[2] who passed through Cache Valley periodically. Where he was from or how much he charged no one remembered. But he did make visits to this area and fitted many people with glasses.

Dentists

As Utah became more settled, traveling dentists made their rounds periodically. In 1864, the Isaac Dunford family migrated to Salt Lake Valley. He was called by the L.D.S. Church to help settle Bear Lake. The winter of 1865-1866 was severe and the two older Dunford boys, William and Alma, could not find work. They decided to try "the city" (Great Salt Lake City). In Salt Lake, Alma became an apprentice to Dr. H. H. Sharp. In a short while he became a very able dentist.

During this period of Utah's History, there were very few dentists, so Alma acquired a dental kit and began going from town to town. He traveled through the Utah territory from Malad to St. George. He unpacked and stayed in a town just long enough to catch up on the needed dental work. Then he packed and moved on. The author quotes to give a more vivid description of the dentists travels. The following is a letter written by Alma Dunford to his father at Bear Lake in October 1872.

---

[1]John C. Dowdel, "Journal of John C. Dowdle," Joel E. Ricks Collection of Transcriptions (Utah State University Special Collections Library, Logan, Utah), IX, 276.

[2]Merz.

> I intend staying here (Beaver, October 10, 1872) till next Saturday, then from here I go to Cedar City; stop a week, from there to Toquerville; and next place in my wife's arms at St. George. I will stop longer at these places if there is business enough to pay. You can't imagine what I have to pass through to make my little money. It requires energy, packing and unpacking and out in all kinds of weather. I receive several letter a week from my wifey, /daughter of Brigham Young/ and of course they cheer me and I intend to be with her in three weeks. It is very lonesome traveling and working, and I am going to quit it soon.[1]

In 1877 Mr. Alma Dunford was called to a mission in England. He returned, set up an office in Salt Lake and practiced until 1917. He never returned to peddling his services on the road again.[2]

Toothaches were common. Simple remedies such as laudanum, (a tincture of opium), oil of peppermint, or heat gave relief only for a short time. The only sure way of relief was by pulling the decayed tooth. This was usually performed by the town blacksmith or tinsmith, with crude homemade tools. Many a mid-wife, barber, bishop or harness maker also pulled teeth. A kitchen chair was placed out doors in the summertime or on the back porch in the winter. The patient would seat himself, take a firm grip on the chair and hang on. The "dentist" fetched his forceps, or if he was a blacksmith or harness maker he took a pair of pliers off the table and began. Some did rinse them off. One old gentleman heated his, then wiped them off on his dirty leather apron before putting them in the patient's mouth. They pulled until a whole head of teeth was out or until the patient could stand no more. Often

---

[1] Kate B. Carter, ed., Treasures of Pioneer History, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1956), V, 87.

[2] Ibid., 88.

a dentist with a little more background lanced the gum around the tooth before removing it. After a number of weeks, or until the gums were healed, the patient sought out a dentist who could make "store teeth" to replace his old ones. If one was not close enough they waited until an itinerant dentist came through and then had the teeth made.

An Aunt of Clara Merz had all her teeth extracted by an itinerant dentist and a week later returned with her dentures. They were a complete success. They fit well and she used them for years.[1]

Rosetta L. Buttars tells of an itinerant dentist (a Mr. Stover) came to their home and removed her mother's teeth. A few weeks later he came again, made a plaster of paris impression and then made the dentures right in their own home. This set of teeth cost her father thirty head of sheep. She said money was too scarce. Her mother wore the dentures sixty years.[2]

Dr. Byron L. Kesler was the first dentist to open an office in Centerville, Utah. This was in 1881.[3]

This shows that traveling dentists or local men did a great deal of dentistry. Other dentists lived in the larger towns and periodically traveled to the out-of-the-way places. According to Isable B. Brunson East Millard County depended on traveling densits up until about 1913.[4]

---

[1]Merz.

[2]Buttars.

[3]Kate B. Carter, Treasures of Pioneer History, V, 107.

[4]Kate B. Carter, ed., Treasures of Pioneer History, V, 113.

Dr. Christie and Dr. Lorenzo Foutz were traveling dentists. They always stayed a week or so at the Jensen's Hotel in Sevier County. J. Jensen, owner of the hotel, had all his teeth crowned with gold in exchange for board and room.[1]

In the sparsely settled regions of South Eastern Idaho dentists were also itinerants.

Very little is recorded on dentists in Cache Valley, thus these accounts were inserted. Cache Valley and the surrounding area was an out of the way place similar to those cities, therefore it can be assumed traveling dentists supplied the needs of many outlying areas for years.

Manufactured and Miscellaneous Goods

Utah's peddlers can be classified into three general categories: first, the local peddler; secondly, those who came out of Ogden or Salt Lake, peddling manufactured goods; and thirdly, those who came into the state from other parts of the nation.

The first group peddled locally. They sold local or near local home grown fruit, produce and some services. The second group were Utahns but lived "over the hill." They were from the larger Utah cities, living in Ogden or Salt Lake. Their families and homes were there. But they peddled in outlying towns and valleys. They usually had a specific route which took a few days up to a couple of weeks to make. They sold mostly manufactured goods, traveled in a wagon and camped by themselves. Often

---

[1] Kate B. Carter, ed., Treasures of Pioneer History, V, 116.

they were of Jewish descent. Having traveled the same route a number of years they became well known to those they sold to. But as the years have passed, most of the names have been forgotten, as well as the prices. Most old-timers claim there were many peddlers. They were crossing the Valley most of the time. They were so common people just took them for granted, never dreaming that they might be a thing of the past. Therefore, they have been greatly forgotten.

The third group were those who came from other parts of the nation. Some came in wagons (such as the medicine man) but most came on the train. Many of these peddlers came to Logan, stayed at the hotel and went out from there. They rented a small buggy for $1.00 a day and in a few days covered the whole Cache Valley area. Many of these outsiders were also Jewish.[1]

Fortunately, a book was made available (through inter library loan from Duke University) which was written by a peddler who came through Utah and later wrote his story of peddling. In his book The Pack Peddler, he writes of his experiences among the Mormons. He was one of the outsiders who came through on the train, and stopped long enough to canvass the area.

At the turn of the 20th Century Mr. Provol decided he would like to try the West. He had peddled embroidered shirtwaists and patterns throughout Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. At times he had had as many as twenty-five persons working under him. A home seekers excursion attracted him to Salt Lake City, Utah. As a boy he had peddled bananas

---

[1] Hansen.

to the immigrants on their way to Salt Lake City and also to the "Mormon" missionaries. He shipped several thousand patterns to Salt Lake City and with six of his best agents went West. Stepping off the train in Utah's capitol he saw a huge sign across the street by a window. It read "$5.00 embroidered shirtwaist patterns now being slaughtered to $1.50."[1] This was very discouraging to them after their big investment and traveling the long distance. To take their minds off their problems Mr. Provol took the whole crew out to Salt Air. Here they had an enjoyable swim and marveled how one could not sink in the briny waters of the Great Salt Lake.

The next morning Mr. Provol decided to try peddling his wares. He went to a "fine residential district" in Salt Lake City. A pleasant elderly lady opened the door at his first house and invited him in. There on the wall was a portrait of Brigham Young. He made this comment. "For the first time in my life, I was in a Mormon home."[2]

Even though a store in downtown Salt Lake had a big sale on shirtwaist patterns the lady had never seen one. She invited in a few neighbor friends and Mr. Provol sold his immediate supply in the first home he called at. He returned to the city and found his crew out, sightseeing, and enjoying an organ recital at the Mormon Tabernacle. The next morning they each went in different directions and sold their supply long before evening.

---

[1] Provol, 150.

[2] Ibid., 152.

Later Mr. Provol's brother, Jack (who later settled in Provo, Utah and became a prosperous merchant) met him in Salt Lake City and they traveled to the outlying areas in a rented team and wagon. I will quote from Mr. Provol's book The Pack Peddler giving his impression of the Mormon people.

> We found the Mormons both hospitable and congenial. Whenever visiting one of the homes near noontime, they would invariably invite us to eat with them. They would even unhitch our horses, put them in their stable and fill the stall with alfalfa. It is a part of their religion to take care of the traveller within their gates. At the very first farm house we visited, a very pleasant old lady appeared at the kitchen door and cordially invited us to have dinner with the family. This family's name was Jansen. They had immigrated from Sweden several years before, settling on the little Utah farm. It is needless to say that Mr. Jansen was astonished when I informed him that I, too, was born in Sweden.
>
> That afternoon there was to be a conference of several Mormon women. Mrs. Jansen suggested that I wait and show my patterns to them. This I did, and sold almost every woman present either one or two patterns.
>
> I found that they had gathered to discuss ways and means of raising five hundred dollars for the furnishing of the new community center building. I immediately conceived an idea of suggesting that they take the agency for my shirtwaist patterns in that district, allowing them a dollar on each pattern sold. They accepted my proposition. I shipped five hundred patterns to Mr. Jansen, who took charge. Within a few weeks' time I received a check. The women had raised the money they needed and at the same time had made a handsome profit for me.
>
> The Jansens invited us to spend the night in their home and that evening I learned from Mr. Jansen the first inside story of the life and migration of the Mormons . . . .
>
> The mormons believe that some day they, with the Jews, will return to the Holy Land. They are an industrious and religious lot of people and are firm believers in the true brotherhood of man.
>
> Personally, I have always cherished the highest respect for the Mormons. While there are a few wealthy Mormons the majority of them are small farm owners.

> Next we proceeded to Cahche /sic/ Valley, which is entirely a Mormon settlement, having several towns, of which Logan, with a population of ten thousand is the county seat. It is the very heart of a rich and fertile valley, the fruit-raising section of the state. Here they raise delicious peaches, plums, apples, and cherries. There are several important fruit-packing houses and canning establishments which are well equipped and which give employment to hundreds of people.
>
> Practically every Mormon home in the valley has its own bee hives. I found this out in a very convincing manner. One morning I had no sooner stepped out of bed than I felt a sharp sting on my toe. I thought I had accidentally stepped on a tack and the entire tack was imbedded in my toe. When I pulled it out I saw instead of a tack, a full-fledged bee stinger which its zealous little owner had left behind in its hasty retreat. My toe swelled rapidly. I summoned the hotel clerk to my aid and he sent for the local doctor who soon brought out the balance of the stinger. The doctor proclaimed me as a full-fledged Mormon, inasmuch as the insignia of the Mormons is a bee hive.[1]

Later he moved on to Wyoming where he discovered a unique thing about Utah.

> I worked several Wyoming towns, but was not as successful as I had been in Utah. Most of the Mormon women could sew, and made their own clothes, but the women of Wyoming knew less about sewing and, therefore, bought ready-made clothes.[2]

One of the truly main items peddled in the U. S. was tinware. The author had little thoughts that tinware would be manufactured and peddled out here in this oasis but it was. Christopher Lister Riding along with his wife, Maryann Hale, joined the Latter-day Saint Church in England in 1840. He was a tinsmith in England by trade and twenty years later found him in St. George where he had been called on a mission. There was not enough business in St. George to provide his family so he purchased

---

[1] Provol, 153-158.

[2] Ibid., 184.

a small four-wheeled wagon and an ox. He loaded his wagon with tinware and tools and began his selling to all the Northern settlements as far north as Beaver. Most of his sales were for flour, butter, potatoes, cheese, and other food products.

Because of the difficulty and expense in shipping in sheet tin, he made his wares from waste tin cans. The good people saved all empty cans and metalware for him. From these he fashioned buckets, milkpans, tin cups, plates, bread cans, lamps, canteens, coffee pots, washboards, and other items. He was truly a master workman. The ball on the Temple and Tabernacle in St. George are his works.[1]

Before electricity came in, a lamp peddler traveled through calling door to door, claiming he had a "lamp and wick which would not smoke, smell, or ever need trimming."[2]

One such peddler called at Mary Beckstead's mother's home. "He had pretty pink ones."[3] They were guaranteed not to smoke. Her mother bought some but if they were not careful the wicks still smoked.

As early as the 1880's sewing machines were peddled in the Utah territory. In J. C. Dowdle's personal diary we read for March 21 and 22, 1888, "Monday and Tuesday--All fine and healthfull. Mr. Roberts, the sewing machine agent came and remained here the remainder of the week to Friday."[4] It is not known if this agent was from Cache Valley. By the

---

[1]Kate B. Carter, ed., Heart Throbs of the West, III, 215-216.

[2]Wood.

[3]Beckstead.

[4]John C. Dowdle, "Journal of John C. Dowdle," Joel E. Ricks Collection of Transcriptions (Utah State University Special Collections Library, Logan, Utah), VIII, 46.

length of time he stayed he was no doubt from Salt Lake, Ogden, or even farther away.

Another mention was found of a sewing machine itinerant. A Mr. Fletcher made his living by peddling sewing machines. This was during the first twenty years of the 20th Century.[1]

Joe Ziler, a peddler from Ogden or Salt Lake (not known), peddled goods in Cache Valley and was happy to trade them for hides. He seemed to know some little item would get him a hide, which of course, he knew the value of and it was very profitable to him.[2]

To supplement home income, many peddled. A Mr. Mendenhall peddled in the valley, exchanging goods (not known) and taking them to Salt Lake for the cash.[3]

Indians also peddled at times, although they begged more. They sold some yardage and then begged for tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits. The squaws did the begging and the bucks did the selling. Along with yardage they sold small Indian-made items and in Northern Utah the Indians sold leather goods. This was in the 1890's and early 1900's.

Rugs were hand-woven and peddled.

Mr. Charles Checketts peddled his services. He carried in his buggy a flat stone, and a small wheel stone that turned. "He could sharpen just about anything." He spent all day going door to door sharpening scissors, knives and axes. Mr. Checketts made close to a

---

[1]Wood.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Fay H. Johnson, An Early Economic History of Richmond, Utah, Seminar Paper (Utah State University Special Collections Library, Logan, Utah, May 25, 1957), 18.

dollar a day, some days a little more, but much of his pay was not in specie but maybe a square of bacon, a small cured ham, a jar of honey or maybe cheese or butter. "There was very little cash in those days."[1]

Construction crews in the Valley were ready markets for the local fruit and vegetable peddlers.[2]

Christmas trees were also peddled around the Christmas season. These were peddled from the 1880's into the 1900's. They sold for 10¢ a tree.[3]

Brooms from the Logan Broom Factory were peddled around the turn of the century. Mr. Yeates could not remember the price of them.[4]

In 1920-1921 there was a recession. Things were extremely slow. Young men looked everywhere for a dollar or two, a little spending money. They sold just about everything and anything that could be sold. At times peddling part-time brought in just enough cash to pay taxes. Cedar posts, timber, lumber, and firewood were peddled. The author's grandfather, Niels Johnson, from Hyrum, spent many winters in the mountains, cutting cedar posts for a little extra cash.

Tiby and Jack Yeamens of Huntsville peddled a lot of wood. When they were not going house to house or delivering a load, they would take a large load to the north side of the old Tabernacle Square in Ogden. This was a common place to buy, sell and trade. They set on

---

[1] William Checketts.

[2] John B. Yeates.

[3] Allen Beckstead.

[4] Elizabeth Yeates.

or near their load until a buyer came by and either picked up the load or had it delivered.[1]

Slabs (the half round sides of logs) from the sawmills were cut into firewood and peddled. It was sold in small amounts or in wagon loads. A lot of this was done by previous ordering. The scotchmen of Eden soon picked up a trick. Instead of loading their load narrow and high they made the bunkers low and wider. This wideness made the buyer think this was a bigger load so of course they were asked to (and did) pay more. Most little communities had small wood yards where people could call with their wagons and pick up what they needed. Farr's of Ogden started with a small firewood yard.[2]

In the diary of John Clark Dowdle, he mentions for Tuesday, February 1, 1898, "James Lewis, the trinket pedler sic came in the evening. We purchased some small articals sic of him."[3]

Sharksters from California also came through Cache Valley selling stands of eucalyptus trees. The land was guaranteed to have eucalyptus trees on it. They claimed the trees grew very fast and could be sold for the eucalyptus oil in them or for pilings for the many warfs in California. They had a pitch all worked out to clinch the deal. A man in Logan bought five acres but later sold it. This man's name was not known.[4]

Many goods sold but not peddled went to the miners of the La Platte Silver Mines in Utah, and the rich Placer Mines in Wyoming. Many a wagon

---

[1]Allen.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Dowdle, Book II, IX, 194.

[4]Hansen.

stopped in Cache Valley and loaded up with fruits, vegetables, berries, butter, cheese, and homemade candies.

Not peddled, but of interest, is the Gessel Brick Company. Many farmers came to the Gessel Brick Yard for bricks to erect their chimneys and fireplaces. Old Main on the Utah State University Campus is made of brick from the Gessel Brick Yard. In 1901 the sugar factory was built of 1½ million bricks from this yard, and delivered on the job for $5.50 a thousand.[1]

Ice houses were a common thing in each community, but because of its perishability, it seems not to have been peddled. It was called for and used for making homemade ice cream and preserving the deceased until burial.[2]

Honesty of Utah Peddlers

Dorothy J. Buchanan wrote an article in the Utah Historical Quarterly, Winter 1966. Her father, Henry C. Jacobs, began working for John Scowcroft in Ogden in 1894. After two years in the store they asked him to go on the road for them. His father said yes "if I could keep myself free from evils associated with the word "drummer," . . . .[3]

Mr. Jacobs went as far as he could on the train and then hired a team to visit towns where the railroad did not reach. His first salary was $60 a month and later a commission of 3 percent of sales was added.

---

[1] Gessel.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Dorothy J. Buchanan, "Life On The Road, Reminiscences of a Drummer in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXXIV (Winter, 1966), 23-24.

In 1896 he was called on a mission to Great Britain and when he returned in June 1896, he began again for Scowcrofts. His routes varied, anywhere from Lehi to St. George to Moab and Monticello, and most of the small towns inbetween. He sold mainly to established retail stores. He usually stayed at the town hotel for 50¢ a day and 50¢ a meal, adding up to $2.00 for a full day. At times he took a .22 rifle and shot as he drove along. Often he had food with him, a can of oysters, sardines, wedge of cheese or a box of soda crackers.[1]

He gained many friends, saw Utah, and as a whole enjoyed his travels very much. In fact, he met his wife while working in this particular trade.

After his day's work, he enjoyed the hospitality and friendship of the home in which he stayed. They spent the evening playing croquet, singing in the parlor after the evening meal or having a program or party. He was called a drummer but was not looked upon as "drummers" from the East were.[2]

The author was curious as to where the term "drummer" came from. In an issue of a New England magazine Yankee, a page is given to questions and answers. In the March 1968 issue a question was written in by a reader.

Question: Have you any idea how the travelling salesman earned the sobriquet of "drummer?"

Answer: In certain books on Americana, it claims that the travelling salesman was originally a peddler, driving a team or horse which pulled a wagon-load of merchandize. On approaching a village such a man would beat a drum to announce his

---

[1]Dorothy J. Buchanan, "Life On The Road, Reminiscences of a Drummer in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXXIV (Winter, 1966), 24-27.

[2]Buchanan, 26.

> approach. This was the early method of "drumming up a sale."[1]

Wilhelmina Jensen Gunn writes a story of her life in the Elsinore House. Her father, Jen Iver Jensen, an industrious man, built a hotel in 1897. Their home was remodeled and made into a comfortable hotel. There were three daughters in the family at that time and when Bishop Jensen began his thoughts of building the hotel he approached one of the Latter-day Saint Church General Authorities, as to whether he should venture it or not. President Lund felt it would be a good financial investment but warned against that kind of environment for his daughters and told him "If you do, never cease to watch over them."[2]

One of the precautions was to be on guard against the treacherous "drummer." They were notorious for always being ready to lead women astray. Years later as Mrs. Gunn wrote she said,

> I want to say in praise of the traveling men who stopped at our hotel, that with the exception of a few, no finer men ever lived . . . there was no indication of the treacherous "drummer" we had been warned against.[3]

Her parents let them go out to dances and for buggy rides but always made the decision as to who was worthy. They always felt that their girls were safe with the Z.C.M.I. salesmen. The girls enjoyed so much looking at the samples that the salesmen displayed, the coats, skirts, and shoes. Often the girls ordered their clothes from these salesmen.

---

[1] Yankee, (March, 1968), 30.

[2] Wilhelmina Jensen Gunn, "A Drummer's Home Away From Home," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXXIV (Winter, 1966), 30-37.

[3] Gunn, 35.

This type of salesman did sell to individual people but his work was to sell stock to the many scattered merchantile stores of Utah.

"Most peddlers were honest. They sold products and stood behind them."[1] This was fairly common to hear during the interviews. Most people said the peddlers were honest. Some were a little hard to bargain with but they did not try to cheat their customers. Being among a close religious group of people, and traveling a specific circuit, kept the peddler honest. The local people who dealt with meats, fish, produce, and dairy goods were working among fellow Mormons and local people. This kept them honest. In fact, like Mr. Anhder mentioned, his family became close friends to those who came to the house for produce and those who peddled.

Were Local Merchants Hurt by Peddlers?

There was little peddling in Utah during the very early period. The main reason was the Mormon oasis was too far away from manufactured goods. An itinerant could not load a wagon at St. Louis and travel 1,000 miles to the Mormon people, sell his goods and return 1,000 miles and make any profit. The distance was too great and with too many hazards. Secondly, the Latter-day Saint people did not have specie with which to pay for the goods. Money was extremely scarce and in some places almost non-existent. Therefore, the peddler would have to barter. Occasionally an itinerant came through Utah from California on his way to the to the East. He stocked a few boots, clothing, tea, coffee and sugar to

---

[1] Hansen.

sell to the Mormons. These he sold for cash and went on. Also a few merchants did come in from St. Louis with large loads of goods. They sold only for gold or farm product, they could take to California.

As communities grew, stores appeared and most communities of any size had a small merchantile store. Often these were owned by "Gentiles" and sold only for cash. (All people in Utah who were not Mormons were called Gentiles.) They did not sell on time and this greatly upset the leaders of the Church. In fact, Brigham Young spoke out against this. The Latter-day Saints "wanted credit at their Brother's stores, but always paid cash to the Gentile."[1]

To give an example of the scarcity of money, I relate a story which appeared in the Utah Historical Quarterly by William R. Palmer. William R. Palmer's father, who was then living in Iron County, received a letter from his mother in Wales. In those days the postage was collected on delivery. The postage due was 75¢, but Mr. Palmer's father did not have the 75¢ with which to redeem the letter. Six weeks later a wagon-train passed through Iron County. A wagon in need of repair was fixed by Mr. Palmer and he was paid with a $5.00 bill. He ran straight to the Post Office to get his letter but the postmaster could not make change for the $5.00. Mr. Palmer left the $5.00 and took the letter. Many weeks later he accepted a merchandise order on the Deseret Iron Company Store for the $4.25 change.[2]

---

[1] Kate B. Carter, ed., Heart Throbs of the West, III, 250.

[2] William R. Palmer, "Early Merchandising in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, XXXI (Winter, 1963), 37.

In early Cache County when the settlers first arrived, the nearest place to buy anything was Salt Lake City. At times someone went to Salt Lake and brought back a load of merchandise to distribute among the Saints here. Some of the prices were calico, 75¢ a yard, soda, 35¢ a package, thread, 35¢ per box, nails and sugar 60¢ a pound.[1]

The first store in Mendon was owned by Charles Bird around 1865. Tea sold for $5.25 a pound, wheat around $5.00 a bushel.[2]

By 1868 Z.C.M.I. was founded in Salt Lake City and started business in early 1869. Within a short while many Z.C.M.I. stores were scattered over the territory. The Hyrum Coop was organized March 31, 1869.[3] The Logan Cooperative Merchantile Store was organized May 1 of that same year.[4]

Thus peddlers were not the only source of merchandise later on. Cache Valley also had other merchantile stores than those previously mentioned: Sherman and Thatcher, Thatcher and Son, Logan Co-operative Merchantile and Manufacturing Institution, Robbins and Goodwin, Zions Cooperative Merchantile Institution,[5] and others are a few of the earlier stores which came and went. Merchandise was available.

---

[1] Kate B. Carter, ed., Heart Throbs of the West, III, 269.

[2] Ibid., 267.

[3] Dial.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Kate B. Carter, ed., Heart Throbs of the West, III, 270.

In August of 1872 the Montgomery Ward Mail-order-house was established and had mail service in Cache Valley that same year.[1] December 20th of the year brought the railroad to Mendon, Utah.[2] This greatly increased the availability of goods in this area. The railroad hauled goods in and hauled bulky farm products out. Reliable, fast, mail-order service was established.

But with a new influx of goods and services available, the peddler did not diminish, but increased. The railroad brought him in as it had the others, and he did hurt local business. How much is not known. Figures and statistics were not kept. But the peddler was here. He traversed Cache Valley and all of Utah in every direction. He delivered, picked up, and redelivered huge amounts of goods.

O. H. Berg said he would die before he would buy from a peddler. He told local people they should buy from local businessmen. Berg was a local businessman.[3]

Although stores were in the area and goods and services available, the peddler still did a thriving business, especially those who peddled dairy goods and produce. This was an era. A time when peddling was needed and was common. It lasted into the 1930's. The peddlers from Ogden and Salt Lake gradually tapered off. Automobiles were here and roads were being improved. Those not close to a store easily drove into town now. The peddlers who came from other parts of the nation also

---

[1] Dial.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Beckstead.

dwindled in number. Optometrists, dentists, and pharmacists were now schooled and licensed to practice and the population of the area was such as to keep them here permanently. As World War II began, the peddler of yesterday was almost extinct. The term, peddler, was no longer used. Salesman, was the new terminology. This is still used today, and they remain with us, only not in the vast number they did fifty or sixty years ago.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The young men of New England peddled because it was an adventure. They wanted to see the other side of the valley or mountain, and peddling paid their way. Others peddled because it gave them employment. New items were being made in Colonial America and these goods had to be distributed, so young men took the jobs. A few New Englanders peddled to pay their way to a new frontier of their way back home. Many Yankee Peddlers earned enough to attend college or start a small business of their own.

To many of the Jewish immigrants, it was an overflow valve. They did not want to work in the factories or sweat shops, so took to peddling. To others it was the first rung leading to their own business. In many cases the new Jewish immigrant had an uncle, cousin, or friend who was a peddler. They were shown the ropes, lent $20 or $30, and were in business themselves.

Others turned to peddling because they could no longer perform the arduous tasks on the farm. Maybe they had been farmers or factory workers, but now they were too old or their health was gone. There was no unemployment compensation, no accident insurance or Social Security. Thus, those who could no longer perform their tasks, peddled. Just enough at times to keep body and soul together.

Still others took to the road because they were misfits. They were unfit for anything else. They did not or could not hold a job. These

were wanderers, vagabonds, selling just enough to keep going.

In Cache Valley and surrounding areas the main and most important reason for peddling was to create employment. Because of the lack of industry and mining, Northern Utah (Brigham City, north) has never had an over-abundance of employment. Northern Utah is still primarily an agricultural region. So peddling in the Valley was not used to start a new business but to create work.

> One had to make a job of his own. There was very little work. We didn't make big wages, but we ate. I'd get so tired walking around. We had to make work.[1]

Some farmed a few months, then peddled the remainder of the year. Women peddled because they had a few acres on which to raise a few crops to supplement the family income.

Then still others peddled because the cash obtained was used to pay the taxes. Taxes could not be paid in produce, cedar posts, or honey; but a few dollars might be collected by peddling a small surplus. Another reason was to save a crop. A crop could go completely to waste were it not for the farmer himself peddling it. Many a farm crop was peddled, even into the larger cities.

The Need For The Itinerant

Peddling in the U. S. was, in a way, unique. Unlike Europe, the North American Continent, for close to three centuries, had a frontier. With a frontier there are sparsely settled areas. This is conducive to peddling. The dentist, the eye doctor, the country store had not

---

[1] Naylor.

yet moved in and they not being there, turned the trade to the passing itinerant. As the frontier pushed westward the peddler was there. Many times he moved in with the first wagons.

Utah was similar. Brigham Young, the Mormon colonizer, sent many Church members to outlying districts to settle. This left large distances between some settlements, and many of them were not large enough to have all the goods and services at hand, so these small communities gave business to the needed itinerant.

The Graduate School of Business at Stanford University did a research study of the availability and retail prices of selected foods, drug, clothing, dry goods and variety items in typical rural towns in the state of Utah. It is a notable work done by David E. Faville, Dix M. Jones and Richard B. Sonne. For the author's purpose it is too bad the work was not done forty or fifty years earlier. This particular work was done in 1941, using the 1940 population census. The idea was to use as samples small rural towns far enough away from the larger cities that the buyers could not run into a larger city every time they needed an item. In this way, by using smaller out of the way towns, the availability of their goods could be compared with the availability of goods in the larger cities. There were four control cities chosen with which smaller cities and towns could be compared. The rural towns near the control city of Brigham, were Snowville, Plymouth, Clarkston, Newton, Trenton, Fielding, Garland, Tremonton, Collinston, and Honeyville.

The conclusions showed:

1. Seven and eight-tenths per cent of those interviewed in the rural towns reported inadequate choice of dry-grocery items available in their stores. Scarcely any

such complaints were reported in the control cities.[1]

2. Over fifteen per cent in the rural towns reported slow store service, over crowding, and poor arrangement of merchandise . . . .

3. Approximately forty-nine per cent of the consumers in the rural communities reported high prices for groceries, as compared with 17.5 per cent of those interviewed in the four control cities . . . .[2]

4. Grocery prices were found to be generally higher in the rural communities than in the control cities . . . as much as 15 to 20 per cent higher.[3]

6. More than 44 per cent of those interviewed in the rural towns said that their stores did not carry a good range of fresh fruits and vegetables, and over 42 per cent reported a poor range of fresh meats. These reports were substantiated by the interviewers' observations. These deficiencies were accepted by rural consumers more than they might have been by consumers in larger towns, because the study revealed that these consumers for the most part canned or pitted for winter use their own fruits or vegetables and slaughtered their own meat, or that they bought largely from peddlers and local growers.[4]

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions to be drawn from the survey in the light of its original objectives may be summed up as follows: In so far as the ready availability of a wide range of drug, variety, clothing, and dry-goods articles bears on the enjoyment of the various comforts of life, the residents of small rural towns and villages interviewed in this survey were at a disadvantage as compared with their neighbors in medium sized towns. Limited selection, high prices, or complete unavailability were common for these items in the rural districts, and these deficiencies

---

[1] David E. Faville, Dix M. Jones, Richard B. Sonne, Merchandise Availability in Utah, (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1942), p. 16.

[2] Faville, Jones, Sonne, p. 16.

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

[4] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

were most keenly felt by farmer and laborer groups . . . .[1]

> Fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and milk were stocked in good variety in most of the city stores, but were available much less frequently and in limited selection in rural stores. These items were frequently produced locally in the rural towns who did not produce their own fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and milk frequently obtained supplies from neighbors or peddlers . . . .[2]

The report states that the availability of many items were not as easily obtained, as plentiful or as cheap in smaller outlying towns as they were in larger cities. This being the condition in 1941, the author conjectures that the condition was even more pronounced in earlier years, and with much slower transportation, they did not go to the larger cities like was done in the 1940's.

Goods and services were needed. Dentures, cloth, hardware, spectacles, and produce were wanted and were brought by the peddler. If a farm wife needed some pins, buttons or a pair of scissors, she often had to wait days before she got to town. She knew however a peddler would make his round soon and she could buy from him. She kept a slip of paper handy and added to it the things needed. Many outside peddlers sold sauce pans, mouth organs, small gadgets, and household goods which often the homeowner bought just on impulse.

In Dowdle's Diary he mentioned it had been a month since he had been into Logan. This was common to many and the fewer trips they made into town, the more the business went to the itinerant. Quite often the itinerant sold a little cheaper than the local merchants. This gave

---

[1] Faville, Jones, Sonne, pp. 19-20.

[2] Ibid., pp. 211-212.

him a slight edge in the marketing of his goods.

Also there was an economic factor involved. A peddler, forty or fifty years ago, could keep a family on his earnings of three to eight dollars a day. Today those who peddle door to door have to have a tremendous mark-up to make a "living." The super markets, the large department stores and chain stores sell much cheaper by having the customer come to them and serve themselves. Doctors and dentists could not begin to haul their complex equipment around in an automobile. Those in need of these services easily drive to the doctor's office.

The great variety of styles, colors, sizes and texture of clothes, could not be carried door to door. In our age thousands of square feet of floor and window space is given for displays and advertisements.

Our economy, transportation and communication have changed. Our mode of buying is completely different from fifty years ago. People much prefer driving to a modern, air-conditioned building to browse and shop. They compare prices, utility and value.

The "old time" peddler is no longer needed. That era of history is gone. From the 1880's into the 1920's he played a very important role in Northern Utah. No doubt,were a work done for other areas of Utah or other states of the Union, the story would be similar. It would vary some, according to the goods and surplus in that locale. Bear Lake made Northern Utah unique in the availability of fish. Provo, Utah, with its Utah Lake and fruit growing area would no doubt tell the same story as Logan. Washington County, in Southern Utah, with its sparsely settled areas would tell a similar story, especially with some areas raising surpluses in fruits and vegetables.

But this era mostly came to a close in the 1930's. True, door to door salesmanship is still practiced, mainly for the convenience to the consumer. Charity organizations, local and international, still canvas to raise funds or for a benevolence cause; but the peddler of the past, whose history is partially written here, is gone. He filled his role during a time of history when he was needed.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The best general work on the peddlers in the United States is Richardson Wright's, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1927). Similar to Wright, but not as complete is J. R. Dolan's, The Yankee Peddlers of Early America (New York: Bramhall House, 1964). An enjoyable and informative book written by a Jewish Peddler is William Lee Provol's book, The Pack Peddler (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1937). Forgotten Pioneer, by Harry Golden (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963) is an interesting book which contains short autobiographys of two peddlers and also a short History of Levi Straus.

For the story of peddling in Northern Utah, the author has had to rely almost completely upon oral history interviews with persons who either engaged in peddling themselves or who witnessed the peddler and his activities. A few of the more lengthy accounts were taped and are in the author's possession. The bulk of the interviews were recorded by the note taking process. These also are in the author's files. The following is a list of persons interviewed:

Interviews

Alder, Mrs. Leon C., October 18, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Allen, Albert Ethan, October 14, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Anderson, Mrs. Charles C., October 20, 1965, Millville, Utah.

Andreasen, Mos., November 20, 1965, Logan, Utah.

Anhder, Marlin, April 16, 1964, Hyrum, Utah.

Beckstead, Mary, November 2, 1965, Nibley, Utah.

Buttars, Rosetta L., November 13, 1965, Clarkston, Utah.

Bryson, Martha, October 18, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Checketts, Mrs. William, October 18, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Checketts, William, October 18, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Ellis, Claude A., January 17, 1967, North Ogden, Utah.

Gessel, Emil, October 18, 1965, Providence, Utah.

Glenn, Emma, December 6, 1965, Wellsville, Utah.

Godfrey, John, October 10, 1965, Clarkston, Utah.

Hansen, Hans C., October 26, 1965, Logan, Utah.

Israelsen, John A., May 16, 1964, Hyrum, Utah.

Kohler, Fred, October 20, 1965, Providence, Utah.

McGregor, Glen, October 15, 1965, Logan, Utah.

Merz, Clara, Letter written May 20, 1964, Los Angeles, California.

Murray, Evan, September 28, 1964, Logan,Utah.

Naylor, Hyrum, October 25, 1965, Logan, Utah.

Nye, Clyde V., January 15, 1966, North Ogden, Utah.

Olsen, Joseph, December 11, 1965, Hyrum, Utah.

Sorenson, Mr. (would not give first name), October 21, 1965, Lakota, Bear Lake, Utah.

Wood, L. K., October 27, 1965, Mendon, Utah.

Yeates, Elizabeth, November 2, 1965, Nibley, Utah.

Yeates, John B., November 2, 1965, Nibley, Utah.

Interviews Not Cited

Byler, Charlie, Fish Haven, Idaho.

Checketts, Floyd, Providence, Utah.

Godfrey, Veral, Clarkston, Utah.

Hemmert, Lorenzo, St. Charles, Idaho.

Riggs, Alma L., Nibley, Utah.

Thompson, David, Clarkston, Utah.

Wilkes, Ernest, Fish Haven, Idaho.

Scattered references of peddling are found in the publications of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers: Heart Throbs of the West, and Treasures of Pioneer History, edited by Kate B. Carter. They are:

Carter, Kate B. ed. Heart Throbs of the West, Vols. III and V: Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1941, 1944.

Carter, Kate B. ed. Treasures of Pioneer History. Vol. V: Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1956.

Mention was made of a few peddlers in John C. Dowdle's, "Journal of John C. Dowdle." Joel E. Ricks Collection of Transcriptions. Vols. VIII, and IX: Utah State University Special Collections Library, Logan, Utah, 1945.

Other works of interest are found in Utah Historical Quarterly:

Buchanan, Dorothy J. "Life 'On The Road,'--Reminiscences of a Drummer in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1: Winter, 1966.

Gunn, Wilhelmina Jensen. "A Drummer's Home Away From Home," Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1: Winter, 1966.

Palmer, William R. "Early Merchandising in Utah," Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXI, No. 1: Winter, 1963.

Other articles and periodicals cited are:

Bedini, Silvio A. "On Time--The Yankee Pedlar." Hobbies, Vol. LX: February 1956.

Business Week. "Everything Under the Sun," July 13, 1963.

Fawcett, Clara H. "Dollology," Hobbies, Vol. LXVIII: December 1963.

Scull, Penrose. "Pack-Road to Yesterday," American Heritage, Vol. VII: April, 1956.

Springer, Lois E. "Bells," Hobbies, Vol. LXII: July, 1957.

Wilson, Charles Marrow. "Road Side Americans," Harper's Monthly, Vol. CLXXI: October, 1938.

Yankee, March, 1968.

Other books cited are:

Dial, Willis A. comp. "Chronological Survey of Activities Within Cache Valley to 1880," Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1949-50.

Faville, David E., Dix M. Jones, Richard B. Sonne. Merchandise Availability in Utah, Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1942.

Jenson, Willard Conrad. History of Logan, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1927, p. 88.

Johnson, Fay H. An Early Economic History of Richmond, Utah. Seminar Paper. Utah State University Special Collections Library, Logan, Utah, May 25, 1957.

Jones, Fred M. "Peddlers," Dictionary of American History, Vol. IV: New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons.

VITA

Paul Johnson Nye

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: Peddling in Northern Utah as Compared to the Continental United States

Major Field: History

Biographical Information:

Personal Data: Born at Ogden, Utah, August 27, 1936, son of Clyde V. and Bertha Ann Johnson Nye; married Claudia Ellis August 28, 1959; three children--Jeffrey, Ben, and Dave.

Education: Graduated from Weber County High School in 1954; received the Associate of Science degree from Weber State College at Ogden, Utah; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Utah State University, at Logan, Utah, with a composite in Secondary Education and History, in 1964; received Master of Science degree from Utah State University, at Logan, Utah, in 1969.

Professional Experience: Teaching Assistant 1964-65, Utah State University, History Department; full-time teacher in History, Logan City School District, 1966-68.