

In the days of yore the old country store was by no means a bore. It was just the opposite. It was the focal and pivot point for the surrounding countryside and farmers and their families for many miles east, west, south and north visited and traded at the store.

After the men bought their plugs of tobacco for smoking and chewing and sampled the cheese and the cider, they took their seats on the long platform at the front of the store and also "chewed the fat" until the women settled their egg and butter money with the storekeeper, an honest man who knew values and was adept at bartering.

The country store was the busy hub, the meeting place and the "parliament" where arguments were common and battles never won.

This columnist is indebted to Morley McKague for the following historical story regarding the old country store:

Getting back to 1889 when the country store was a flourishing business, it meant doing things the hard way to what we know it today. The goods were brought in on the Grand Trunk Railway to Corson Siding and in turn they were brought the two miles to the store by means of a single horse hitched to a democrat, and in the winter by the poor old horse and single or light sleigh.

Very well I can remember meeting the train about ten o'clock at night with my father and it was cold as well as frosty in the winter months. We would have a full load on as well as a couple of the old bread boxes filled with bread that was unwrapped and we would be peddling bread to the families all the way home, stuffing it into the mail boxes along the road where some of the families were in bed.

We would finally get home, get the load off and the horse bedded down for the night, the first stoked up and off to bed ourselves, only to have to get up in the morning to meet the train again on the way out to Lindsay to send out the eggs that had accumulated,

and the empty bread boxes for a refill.

At the station it was my job to watch the horse when the train was rolling into the stop and the horse was fearful of the old train, as they always seemed to have to blow off steam which did not help matters any. But then there was always lots of help around the station when the train came in. The Scrivers, Richmonds, Coopers, Corsons, Lowers, Decaters, and Haight boys were ready and willing to assist when we needed a hand.

The train went out in the morning at seven o'clock and returned at any time between nine and twelve at night. Then in 1932 it got down to coming in at noon three times a week and would leave again at three o'clock the same day, and then it got down to removing the tracks, and the old stations are gone and the transports have taken over.

In about 1932 T. E. Ryan started the transport business that brought the goods into the store, and in 1938 Ross Golden bought him out and the Golden Transport carried on until he sold, and since that time it has been a mixture of transports doing the work. The good old country store is very near a thing of the past and the country folks are moving out of the country to the towns and cities, so what is there left for the country store anyway nothing, only

a ghost town and country side.

The bread that I had made mention of being shipped in the big old bread boxes came from Brysons Bread Limited and then Purity Bread Limited in Lindsay. A few years later it came from Neals and Duxbury Bakers of Victoria Road as well, all unwrapped and did it smell good. In later years when I grew a little older I was sent to the station with the horse and sleigh in the winter time to pick up the freight, and the old mare we had used to shy at things along the road and I was half scared of her capers.

This one day I was going home with a load, she decided to shy at a boat in the creek at Scrivers Bridge, and with her carrying on, we ended up in the swamp, load and all, upside down. The mare was down and tangled up in the harness with broken shafts, and I could not get her on her feet. Just by a stroke of luck, Campbell Graham and his wife came along in the cutter and he got the horse up on her feet, the sleigh on the road loaded up, and away home I went with broken cases and crushed packages.

Going through some of the old books that were used by my grandfather, I find the names of families that I remember and are still around the countryside, such as Ashby, Alton, Brentnell, Bailey, Black, Boadway, Burgass, Ball, Bradimore, Cameron, Coulter, Corson, Davey, Decater, Demoe, Dallyn, Earl, Faulkner, Foley, Gostlin, Gilmor, Gunn, Greer, Holiday, Hilton, Hutchison, Hannivan, Irwin, Jerrit, Liscombe, Murrey, Maxwell, Morgoson, Mould.

McLeod, Macdonald, McLean, McKay, McCallum, McDonald, McKee, McNish, McRea, Newman, Newson, Obrine, Odare, Parks, Peel, Prosser, Read, Reid, Rae, Ryan, Rogers, Rathburn, Southern, Sriver, Sears, Smith, Shannahan, Sinclair, Tallman, Tough, Wilson, Ward, Winterburn, Wallace, Young are a few names to mention. There are many more but room does not permit.

Also from this book are a few quotes of the prices as of 1892: tea 25 cents a pound, spool of thread 3 cents, pair of shoes 65 cents, pair of rubbers \$1.50, bacon 10 cents a pound, fullcloth 55 cents a yard, lining 10 cents a yard, felt boots \$3 a pair, wash basin 8 cents, plug of tobacco 10 cents, pail 10 cents, butter 17 cents a pound, sugar 7 cents a pound, coal oil 20 cents a gallon, a hundred pound bag of flour \$2, broom 25 cents, nails 4 cents a pound, laces 5 cents a pair, satin 9 cents a yard, eggs 9 cents a dozen, pair of mitts 25 cents, castor oil 18 cents a bottle, file 15 cents, wool yarn 16 cents a pound, hat \$1.15, flannel 20 cents a yard, axe head \$1, shovel 80 cents, apples 4 cents a pound, and this no doubt would be dried apples; soda biscuits 5 cents a pound, salt 10 cents a pound and work shirt 55 cents. This is a few of the prices of the by-gone years. Now for a bit of the wages paid and the money received for the produce:

The rate of wages according to what I can see was seventy-five cents a day for a man. Charles McNenney who lived in Digby Township cut and drew to Corson Siding which would be about fifteen miles 215 ties at 8 cents each. William Sherman cut and delivered poles. A 25 foot pole with a 6 inch top brought 40

cents. A 60 foot pole with a seven inch top brought \$4.

The loading of wood in box cars at Corson Siding was as follows: for a car 33 feet long and wood piled up to 6 feet in the car, the man got 80 cents for loading the car. When loading a car of wood at the village of Victoria Road, they got \$1 per car, and when it was loaded at Wilson's Siding they got \$1.15 per car to load. Most of this wood was shipped to Standard Fuels in Toronto. Maple wood was cut and drawn to Corson Siding for \$1.50 per cord, ash wood was 90 cents a cord and 7,204 feet of logs were cut and drawn to the mill for \$18. Shingle bolts brought \$1.50 per cord. 12 foot cedar posts brought 10 cents each if they were peeled and the unpeeled were 8½ cents each. The eight foot posts brought five cents each peeled. Cull posts were 2½ cents each.

The farmers would bring in their produce in exchange for merchandise, some of which has been mentioned above. They were paid 30 cents a bushel for potatoes, eggs 7 cents a dozen, 2 deer skins \$1.25, one mink skin 60 cents one fox skin 25 cents, one muskrat skin 8 cents. Here is one for the books; paid on account making coffin 75 cents, butter 16 cents a pound, side bacon 8 cents a pound.

In my possession I have the handcuffs that were used by my grandfather when he was county constable. They are complete with the key to op-

erate them. In 1902 George McKague was reeve of Bexley township according to a few pieces of correspondence that were stuck into some of the old ledgers.

Would anyone like a ride on the old steam boat? Well I have a ticket that is good for one round trip on the Str. Wacouta from Coboconk to Fenelon Falls. This ticket had been laying between the floor and the ceiling of the old hall in Coboconk, and one day when I was doing some work and had the floor lifted here was the ticket laying there good as new. How old it is I don't know but it is still good whenever I catch up to the old Wacouta. This steamer plied the rivers and lakes back in the horse and buggy days.

Remember the old spigot? This particular one was used in the Pattie House at Coboconk in the days of the oak barrels. It was driven into the bung hole of the barrel for drawing off the beer. This one is about a foot long and is of bronze... which will weigh about two pounds. It was hardly used by the look of it, but is a thing of the past with all the new methods of bottling and handling.

In the month of June 1905 a new bridge was built over perch creek which is north of the Bexley Corners, at a total cost of \$34.40. Materials \$10.45 and labour \$23.95. The wages at that time were \$1.25 per day, and the work crew consisted of Arthur Peel, Sam

Liscombe, Robert Black, Geo. McKague, Fred McKague, Joseph Harrison, Bert Dallyan, Joseph Black, Geffery Peel, and William Sriver.

These are just a few thoughts on the by-gone days as I had heard and seen, and no doubt when some of you read this, it will bring back some of the happy times that you have had in the past years, but don't forget one thing — and that is there are happy days ahead as well.