

P E D L A R S

passengers - he charged freight down but free passage back.

Next came the pack pedlars. As more families came and the back concessions were surveyed and settled, rough roads were cleared. The pack pedlars made their living by walking through the early settlements offering a variety of wares which they were able to carry on their backs. Their goods included needles and pins, tinware and patent medicines. They sought meals and overnight accommodation wherever they happened to be. Itinerant workmen also would come along looking for a job - the shoemaker with his kit on his back, carpenters and masons peddling their skills.

Pack pedlars continued to walk through the township selling their wares all through the 1800's and up until the early 1930's. Willie Mabee was a walking pedlar many will recall. He was born and lived at the east end of the upper Massassaga road. His father died when he was 18. His mother re-married and they lived on Frank St. in Belleville. Willie continued living there after the death of his mother and step-father. Several times a year he made his rounds. He carried patent medicines, toiletries, stereoscopes and views for them. He sold newspaper and magazine subscriptions; he measured up and took orders for men's suits. In the spring he carted summer dress goods and in the fall winter dress materials. He was a small man and would be bent right over with the weight of his box of wares. Willie, as everyone called him, had the highest regard for his own and all mothers. He wrote at least 17 annual letters on "Mothers' Day" all entirely different, for the Picton Gazette.

Two other pack pedlars of the early 1900's were Johnny Itus and William Henry Alley. Itus was a big man with a heavy mustache and a dark complexion. He called regularly at all the homes up and down the concessions of Ameliasburgh, putting up for the night and getting his meals where hospitality was offered along the way. Alley was a tall thin fellow who sold such items as shoe laces and thread which he carried in a satchel.

Alex Lipson, who later founded the Lipson Stores, got his start as a pack pedlar. He walked the roads of Ameliasburgh, as well as the rest of the County, selling socks, shoe laces, scarves, buttons and other notions. Lipson is quoted as saying that he always made a profit, but he never tried to make a big one.

By the early 1900's there were many peddling wagons operating in Ameliasburgh Township. They were a great convenience to rural folk. Farmers busy on the land, people without means of transportation, busy housewives and mothers with large families all looked forward to the peddling wagons. They covered their routes once a week. Money was scarce but most