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Best Grocery Customers**

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Isaac Rehkopf will close out about half a century of handling warehouse orders in a wholesale grocery here and he's one man who doesn't want to go back to the "good old days."

Not as far as merchandising is concerned, anyway. "Handling food for grocers is much easier today than it was," the veteran said today as he prepared for his retirement on December 31, from **Danser & Co.** "There is no comparison with the way food is handled today than it was in the early 1900's."

He can recall the days when chewing tobacco was stacked 10 feet high along an entire wall at the old **Petoskey Grocery Co.** and there were no cigarettes, but plenty of pipes and pipe tobacco. **Petoskey Grocery** was ended in 1940 and he went to work for **George W. Danser.**

His memory goes back to days when there were not only no trucks hauling groceries but no roads and everything came by railroad. And once more they were sent to towns around here by rail and the grocer met the train and hauled the food to his store by team.

Lumber Camps were the best customers of the wholesalers in those days and there were plenty of them around **Petoskey**, at **Pellston**, **Carp Lake**, **Boyne City**, **St. Ignace**, **Beaver Island**, **Mackinac Island**, **Cedarville** and elsewhere which go supplies from the **Petoskey Grocery** by train and boat.

What did lumberjack cooks order? Plenty of beans, salt pork, dry peaches and prunes, flour by 100 pound barrels, dry peas, barrels of salt pork, tea in 80 pound chests, coffee in 100 pound barrels, pickles by the barrel, sides of meat weighing 200 pounds wrapped in straw paper, molasses in

giant drums, cheese in huge rings, salt and pepper in bulk bags, in fact everything was handled in bulk.

"There was no ready-mixed stuff for housewives or small packaged goods," **Rehkopf** recalled. "But in those days most grocery stores and meat markets {they were separate} delivered by horse and buggy to homes. I believe women lug more stuff around now with cars and supermarkets than they used to even if it is in small packages and cans."

The **Petoskey Grocery Co.** was, organized by **Jacob Koblegard**, of West Virginia, in 1900 after he was here for hay fever and discovered there wasn't another wholesale north of Grand Rapids. With him was **Asmus Peterson** who was a salesman of the firm and employed **Rehkopf** a entire area. He is retired and lives here. **George S. Danser**, father of **George W.**, was the manager of the firm and employed **Rehkopf** a few years after it was organized.

Time has changed many things. A barrel or a wooden box couldn't be found at **Danser's** for a photograph, everything was packed in cardboard. Years ago most every thing from pickles to crackers came in wood.

Sugar, which was scooped from a swinging barrel invented by the late **Ed Cross** of **Petoskey**, retailed 20 or 22 pounds for \$1.00. Nobody made money on sugar, it was a "come-on" to get people to shop.

Cheese now comes, in fancy wrappings with all kinds of fancy mixes. "We had only a couple different kinds of cheese," **Rehkopf** said. "Cheese came in rings and the grocer cut off what you ordered."

"Tobacco was the same way. The grocer kept a knife and sliced off the amount of chewing tobacco you wanted, 5 Cents or 10 cents worth."

"And the women buy a few slices of ham now and five pounds of flour. Why in the old days they'd get a whole ham and 100 pounds of flour at a

crack. The women made their own yeast and baked their own bread."

"The meat market folks used to have two-wheeled carts pulled by one horse which they used to deliver meat."

"As far as the old days are concerned, it was a lot of hard work. Men worked 10 hours a day six days a week for \$1 or \$1.25 a day, top pay was \$2 a day {or 20 cents an hour} Farmers came to town once a week by wagon to buy and sell. Pork chops were 10 cents a pound and they threw in the liver and offered you a soup bone free."

"**Petoskey** was really growing 54 years ago when I cam here, **Rehkopf** said. But **Boyne City** was even bigger and we shipped a car load of groceries every Tuesday. The town never got as big as I had hoped."

And the railroad which used to send five passenger trains a day in on one line a day, has gone down hill.

"Gone too are restaurants, which used to feature Sunday dinners at 25 cents, he said. But then the \$1. a day working man is a thing of the past. All in all he thinks people are better off then they were in "The Good Old Days."



Like old times, **Asmus Petersen**, left, who started selling groceries out of **Petoskey** in 1900, talks with **Isaac Rehkopf**, right, who put up his orders in wholesale warehouses since shortly after that and is retiring from **Danser & Co.** Dec. 31, **Mr. Peterson** retired in 1940.