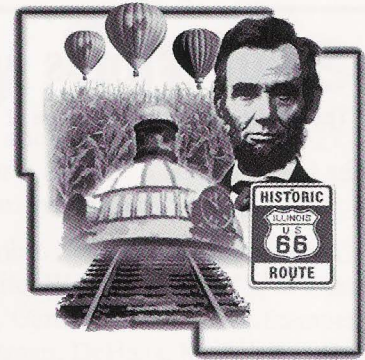


Our Times

Fall 2001

The People, History, and Culture of Logan County, Illinois

volume 6 issue 3



To Market, To Market . . .

Fish and Meat Markets

John “Scotty” Scott was in high school in the thirties, when Catholics did not eat meat on Fridays. Working from a list given his dad by the parish priests, he spent Thursday nights on the phone, taking orders for fish. Friday mornings he spent on his bike, delivering fish all over Lincoln.

Scott’s Fish & Fruit Market, at 507 Broadway, had grown out of a popcorn stand opened by Scotty’s dad, Harry, at 419 Pulaski Street in 1929.

“We made \$180 a month on the popcorn stand, and we thought we were in heaven,” remembers Scotty.

When the Depression hit, Harry bought the fish-market-on-wheels that was run by Mr. McClellan next door and sold fish along with his popcorn. Eventually, he pushed the fish market back and built a lean-to in front for fruits and vegetables. About 1938, he moved to Broadway Street, where he rented a storefront from Jim McCarthy.

Harry bought all fresh fish—from a fish market in Pekin and from Darling and

Company in Bloomington. He kept it on ice in a “great big case,” remembers Scotty.

The fish, which most people pan-fried, included channel cat, buffalo fish, and carp.

Scott’s sold fresh oysters in ice for 89 cents a quart. People used them for oyster stew or fried the select ones.

Mr. Kerpan, who had the grocery store on the corner, “was always such a good guy,” says Scotty. When he got orders for oysters from his Catholic customers, he’d bring them over to Scotty’s dad to fill.

Business was brisk at Thanksgiving and Christmas; one year Scott’s shipped in 15 barrels of oysters for one of the holidays.

When the store was located on Pulaski Street, the Scotts bought rabbits in the winter for a quarter apiece, dressed out; hung them by nails from the lean-to; and sold them for 50 cents each.

Fruits and vegetables came from Mike Silverman, who brought them from Chicago or St. Louis; cantaloupe from Beardstown; cabbage for sauerkraut from the South Water market in Chicago.

On Broadway Street, Harry had a new produce rack with a device that misted the fruits and vegetables peri-



Scott's Fish & Oysters. Harry Scott, left, and Fred Rice. Courtesy John Scott.

(Continued on page 2)

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PUBLISHED AND EDITED BY

Sam Redding

RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY

Nancy Lawrence Gehlbach

ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION

Pam Sheley

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Scott Fulk

The mission of *Our Times* is to publish well-researched, interesting articles about the people, history, and culture of Logan County, Illinois.

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Copies of *Our Times* may be obtained at Prairie Years Bookstore at 121 N. Kickapoo Street in Lincoln or at any of the publication's advertisers. Or call to be placed on the mailing list.

Publisher's Notes

This issue of *Our Times* begins the publication's sixth year. Over the past five years, *Our Times* has presented articles covering 20 topics of Logan County history. That's more than 150 pages of stories about the people, history and culture of our county—what makes us unique, how our lives have intertwined. One hundred fifty pages of *our times*.

Every county has its written histories, but very few counties have a historian the equal of Nancy Gehlbach, who meticulously researches every topic, checks every fact, captures the full human dimension of every story with countless interviews, and writes with the voice of a storyteller.

Nancy has had some help along the way. Darla Hamilton, Pam Sheley, Scott Fulk, and Sheri Plumier have

combined their skills to give the publication an appealing look, line up the sponsors to pay for its printing, and mail and distribute about 3,500 copies of each issue. Tom Seggelke and his staff at Key Printing have handled *Our Times* with the loving care it deserves. The memories of the hundreds of "sources" Nancy has curried have been indispensable.

More than 50 Logan County businesses, organizations, and individuals have financially supported *Our Times* so that readers could receive it free. That says something good about our county. The sponsors of *Our Times* don't expect, and probably don't get, direct business return for their support; rather they support *Our Times* to show appreciation for the business the county's residents have already given them. The sponsors love to hear their customers tell how much they enjoy *Our Times*. And thanking sponsors is the only price the readers are asked to pay.

As this issue of *Our Times* goes to press, Americans are especially conscious of the everyday evidence of freedom's fruits. Like businesses freely supporting the retelling of their county's history and readers freely saying thanks. The rest of what is good about America is found in the first 20 issues of this little publication, and in the next 20 to come. **SR**

(Continued from page 1)

odically. He also got into the seed potato business. "Every farm in the country would buy 100 pounds of seed potatoes every year," says Scotty.

Every summer, Scott's would get in 125 bushels of Southern Illinois peaches every morning for ten days, and they'd "just sell out like nobody's business," says Scotty—housewives were canning them.

After Harry Scott died in 1942, his wife, Flossie, sold the store.

Eckert's Meat Market

Doris Zimmerman Eckert remembers evening drives in the country with her husband, Stanley, and his dad, Ben, to buy cattle or hogs from farmers.

Everett Payne from Hartsburg would pick up the animals in his truck and bring them to Eckert's Market at 121 S. Sangamon Street in Lincoln.

After they butchered the animals in the back room, the men would hose down the concrete floor, leaving it "nice and clean," remembers Doris.

Stan's grandfather John Eckert had opened a butcher shop on the site in 1858; and the big hooks outside the door were left from the days when portions of butchered animals had hung there.

His son, Ben Eckert, Sr., and his grandsons, Stanley, Jim, and Ben, Jr. continued the family occupation. (Ben, Jr. worked at Armour's and the State School but helped butcher.)

When Stan and Jim made pork and liver sausage, cleaning the casings (intestines) was hard work, says Doris. George Eberle came in whenever they were making liver sausage because he loved the taste of hot liver sausage.

The Eckerts had kettles for cooking the meat, a lard press, and a tallow press. They cured bacon and made their own headcheese and tongue loaf.

Basically a meat market, Eckert's also sold a few groceries, including dill pickles (in big jars at 15 cents a dozen), a few canned goods, sauerkraut in barrels, bulk peanut butter, and pigs' feet from Swift.

Like the Hauffes (father Louis and sons Paul and Heinz), who slaughtered at their family's market at 407 Pulaski until they built a slaughterhouse on their farm in 1947, the Eckerts could bring a hog or steer on the hoof in the back door and send it out the front door as a cut of meat.

The Eckerts stopped butchering in 1968; the store closed when the building was sold to the Steffens family in 1997. ■

Neighborhood Grocery Stores

Wilfred Werth had his first piece of store-bought bread in the early twenties, at Milburn's grocery store in the 1200 block of North Monroe in Lincoln. (It was Tasty Bread, and it wasn't sliced.)

Wilfred's family lived at 1210 N. Monroe, so they naturally shopped at Milburn's in the same block.

After Wilfred and Dorothy were married, they lived on North Logan and bought their groceries at the Vlahovic grocery on Davenport. (Once Stookey's, it was later Bruketa's.)

The city was dotted with little grocery stores; in 1931, Lincoln had 44 grocery stores and seven meat markets. Thirteen of the grocery stores had fresh meat departments; several of the meat markets carried groceries.

People walked or sent their children to the neighborhood store and shopped downtown on Saturday night. Grocers knew their customers. They helped them out during hard times; their customers relied on them.

On one occasion, Wilfred's mother asked Mr. Kerpan for a pound of Longhorn cheese, which he sliced and put on the scale. After he weighed it, he said, "Mrs. Werth, that cheese is one cent shy"—and gave her a penny back.

Some of the stores were pretty small. Mrs. Kennedy's grocery store had been a garage, and in the twenties, one woman sold lunch items and school supplies on her front porch across from Central School.

As former grocer Herb Alexander points out, store owners didn't need all the equipment they do today. They could start out "on a shoestring" by buying a few groceries.

A Very Incomplete List

In addition to the Lincoln stores mentioned in this issue, there were many more. One old-time grocer was Adam Denger at 608-612 Broadway.

The grocery store in the cement block

building at 1131 Broadway (across from the dairy bar) had a typical history. In 1914, it was Helm & Son's grocery and meat market. Bill and Fern Werth were the next owners; in 1947, they sold the store to Dean Mote and Carl Apel, who named it the A & M Food Market. Carl sold his share to Lee Williams, and it became Williams and Mote.

In the fifties, the Chester-East Lincoln school bus stopped nearby; one of the boys who got on there picked up candy orders for the other kids.

On North Kickapoo Street, both Mike Verban and Krotz & Sons—Frank; Frank, Jr.; and Anton (Tony)—gave credit to coal miners when the North Mine was closed during the summer. Years later, Krotz & Son meant Tony and Karl.

By 1955, Frank Krotz, Jr. and his son, Edward, were running Frank's Food Fair at 400 N. McLean (now site of the New Wine Fellowship).

Lucas and Farmer was across from Washington (now Scully) Park, and the building that housed W. E. Rus-

sell and Son grocery store at 527 Fourth still has a Bunny Bread advertisement on an outside wall.

Armbrust, Coogan, Moos, Spot Cash, White, Wilson, Heitmann, Williamson, Cantrall, Simon, Weitkamper, Fortman, DeHaas, McAllister, Lyons, Hampe, Smith, Glick, Halford, Routson, Musgrove, Sablotny, Dumser, Mayer, IGA—all grocery names.

Elmer Brown reminded Lincolniters that his Basket Grocery at 114 N. Chicago was home owned. He was referring, by implication, to the chain stores. Gordon Ireland worked for 20 years at A & P and 21 at Kroger's—and remembers when the A & P moved from 125 S. Kickapoo Street to 620 Pulaski. (An early store was at 506 Broadway.)

Kroger's moved from 523 Pulaski to 521 N. Kickapoo to its present location at 530 Woodlawn.

Piggy-Wiggly and Jewel were other chains, as was National Tea. As a kid, Wilfred Werth bought bacon jowls there—eating the bacon and using the fat as fish bait. ■



The Cash Store (formerly Heaton's) at 500 Fifth Street, Lincoln, c. 1938. Owned by J. Heaton, it was managed by Ed Shane, in apron, from 1938 until shortly after Pearl Harbor, when Mr. Heaton sold it to Paul Knochel. Mrs. Shane is at left, daughter Ruth at far right. Courtesy Eileen Shane White.

Some Personal Stories

When Lincoln High School was located on Broadway Street, a couple of the students used to walk over after school to Alexander's grocery store down the street—where the fellow would buy his girl an ice cream bar.

"Pretty soon they were married," remembers Herb Alexander. When they had a child, they brought the baby girl in and weighed her on the produce scale. When she grew up, she weighed her own baby on the same scale.

Alexander's was part of the community for much of the 20th century. Fred Alexander had worked for Holton and Reynolds grocery store; by 1902, he had his own store at 521 Broadway. He sold out when he became ill in 1917. In 1928, he bought the Dehner Bros. Grocery on the corner of Broadway and Sangamon Streets (428 Broadway), later moving to 406 Broadway. His son, Herb, worked with him, taking over the business when his dad died in 1945.

In 1953, Herb bought the Logan County Cooperative Food Locker plant at the Junction of Routes 10 and 121. Alexander's Town and Country Market, which he built in the front, was the second largest grocery store in Lincoln at one time (after A & P). Long-time employees were Mary Cole and Ann Hickey. Herb's wife, Genevieve, was bookkeeper, and three of their children (David, Richard, and Abby) worked at the store during high school and college. David died suddenly in 1996, and Herb sold the store in 1997.

In Herb's younger days, everything was sold in bulk: brown sugar, dried fruits, beans, shredded coconut, cookies, bananas, kerosene, vinegar, coffee, oysters in season, and dried salt mackerel (which people from European countries soaked overnight and boiled with whole potatoes).

Alexander's bought a lot of homegrown items during the season, giving farmers store credit in return. Live chickens were kept in a crate in the back of the store. When a customer added a chicken to her phone order, Herb would put one in a crate and take it to her house, where he would kill it in the back yard.

"That was always a mess," says Herb, who remembers that he always had to

put the chicken under a bushel basket to keep it from flopping around.

The turkeys in the front window of the store were New York dressed, that is, with the heads and feet intact and the feathers removed. The cavities weren't opened, because bacteria would get inside and cause spoilage.

Everything ran on credit. Herb's dad charged the Happy Hour brand of canned goods at Campbell Holton's wholesale house in Bloomington or bought groceries at Carl Dumser's wholesale house next to Lucas and Farmer or at the Lincoln branches of Bunn Capitol and Decatur Grocery.

"There was very little cash in our store," remembers Herb. When Herb sent a delivery to a customer, the bill was noted in their file, which was kept in the heatproof McCaskey file.

Coffee and other bulk items came by rail. The old Dehner grocery store had sent out postcards printed in German to farmers whenever a carload of flour came in, so they could come in and get their year's supply.

In the thirties and forties, Swift and Company would park a railroad car on the siding. Local grocers would pick up items like bacon, luncheon meat, boiled ham, and bologna. (Alexander's didn't carry fresh meat until 1945—most people went to meat markets or the farmers' market.)

Olives and pickled peaches were kept in mahogany cases with stained-glass tops.

Cardboard boxes were unheard of. Herb says he's thrown away "a million dollars worth of five-pound wood cheese boxes." Dried fruit came in wooden boxes; oranges came in crates. Each orange was wrapped in a separate piece of paper; during World War II, when toilet paper was scarce, Herb saved the wrappers for one of his customers.

Herb was the first in town to have frozen foods (Birds Eye vegetables and fruit and Forty Fathom fish).



Alexander's Grocery at 428 Broadway. From left, Frank Patro; Fred Alexander; a customer; and "Wordie," the bookkeeper. Arch on left led to room where dishes from the Illinois China Co. were sold. Courtesy H. Alexander.

The selection was at first quite limited.

After Herb bought the processing plant on Route 10, he butchered for Logan County farmers, taking the meat to the locker on Hamilton Street where they had a sharp freeze (quick freeze).

He used local beef for the store, butchered hogs and lambs, and even had an employee who sold sausage and pork cuts in the taverns. Chicken processing he left to Armour's—it was too labor-intensive.

Herb also did a lot of slaughtering for 4-H projects. Space problems caused by construction of the new highway put an end to slaughtering in 1962.

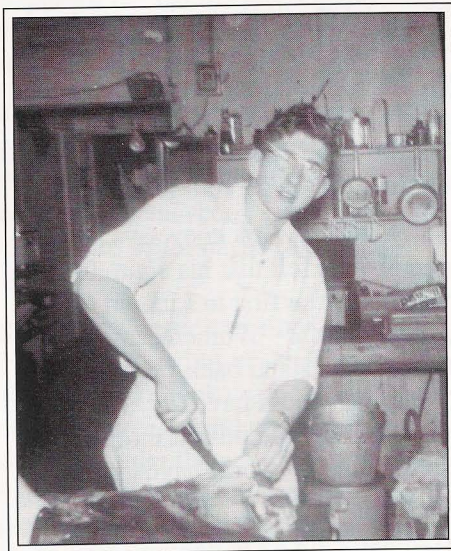
Herb says modern conveniences began at grocery stores: paper sacks (instead of tearing a piece of paper off a roll and wrapping the groceries in it), credit and delivery, and scanners.

Broadway Food Market

Ralph Schmidt ran the Broadway Food Market at 428 Broadway from 1940-42, and “we never had a month that we did less business than the month before,” he says.

The store was vacant when he rented it from Charlie Dehner and put in new equipment. Alexander's and Cramer's groceries were down the block.

Ralph carried a full line of groceries.



Bob Albert cuts meat in 1953. Courtesy Bob Albert.

He belonged to a group of Lincoln grocers called the Capitol Grocery Company and also bought from Metzler produce company on Chicago Street.

“It was a fascinating business, but Uncle Sam had other plans for me,” remembers Ralph. When he left for the service, he sold the merchandise to his uncle, Fred Wackerle, who ran the store for another 2 1/2 years.

Ralph remembers: filling 20-30 little boxes with orders on Saturday nights, for his customers to pick up when they finished their other errands . . . cutting up sides of beef . . . selling groceries to the people who lived in the upstairs apartments in the Dehner block . . . catching on to runners (salesmen) from Chicago who thought they could sell “off-shade” merchandise to dumb farmers.

Albert & Sons Food Market

Emerich Albert, his wife, Augusta, and their two sons moved to Lincoln when Emerich became a salesman for Sawyer Biscuit Company in 1939. In 1948, he bought the Clyde Boyd grocery store at 118 N. McLean (present site of Radio Lab and TV). He set his son Bob, who was 18, to work learning the meat business and becoming store butcher, while his son Bill was put in charge of the dairy and produce departments.

Before long, the family could call everyone in their trading area by their first names. Customers ran their accounts from payday to payday, and orders called in by 10:00 a.m. were delivered by noon. Very little frozen food was available, so many shoppers bought meat and produce daily. Evenings, holidays, and Sundays were busiest, with people lined up to be waited on.

Holidays could be pretty frantic, since turkeys, ducks, chickens, and geese were sold fresh. People placed their orders weeks ahead, and Bob Albert remembers that “we would sweat it out,” while George Gehlbach reassured them that they'd have their fresh-dressed turkeys on time—and they did.

Numerous times a week, they'd go to Armour's to buy chickens that had been killed just hours earlier. If someone wanted fresh rabbit, they could always get one from someone in town—and maybe order an extra, too. In addition to the sides of beef Bob cut up, Albert's occasionally sold items like kidneys, hearts and brains—things Bob doesn't see at the meat counter anymore.

Like many grocery stores, Albert's bought bundles of Christmas trees from the produce companies, even though, says Bob, “it was a pain” to drag the trees into the store every night and back out every morning. The goal was to have “zero” trees by Christmas Eve; any that were left over, they just gave away.

After Bob married Janette Stuan and they started their family, Janette began making homemade glazed donuts, getting up at 4:00 a.m. to prepare them and let them rise. The donut enterprise “just grew and grew” says Bob, whose job it was to fry them. Eventually, the store was selling 30 dozen in one weekend, “a lot for a little store,” he says.

As supermarkets became popular, the volume of business done by little stores continually decreased, until the Alberts sold the building to Ed Pelc in 1958. Bob and Bill went into the construction business, and their dad worked for them as a painter until he retired.

Ritchhart's Grocery

When he was just 17, Harold Ritchhart was running the Green Lantern, a hamburger joint with one gas pump at Fourth and Washington Streets in Lincoln.

He added a few groceries and then bought his Uncle William Ritchhart's grocery at the corner of Eighth and College Streets, renting the building where Albert Ahrens had operated his grocery store. Harold had been a grocer for 48

years when he retired in 1971.

A mail relay box stood in front of the store. Mailmen like Leonard Cronin, Raymond Merry, and Charlie Anderson stopped in during their route.

"You were always welcome there," remembers Charlie Anderson. "You could go back and cut yourself off a piece of bologna and bread and have lunch," or Mrs. Ritchhart might share the chili she was cooking.

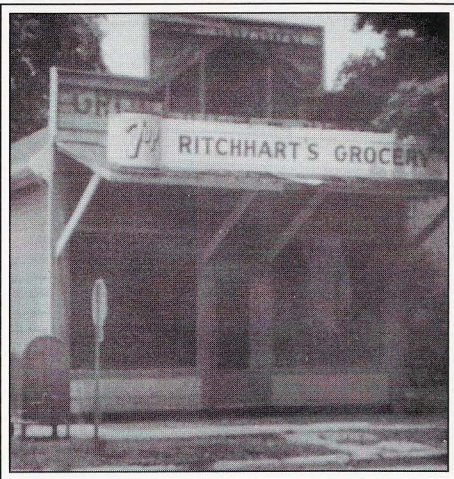
A worker on the city streets might stick his head in the door and ask, "Is the coffeepot on?" Perhaps he would reach into the pop machine and pull a bottle of Coke from the icy water.

All of Harold and Wilma Ritchhart's eight kids learned to count change at the store. Granddaughter Judy Berglin Awe remembers that her grandpa gave her a sewing thread box with a dollar and a half of change and put her in charge of selling penny candy.

Not that there was much change to make. "If kids came in with a quarter or a dime, they spent it all," remembers Judy.

When she was older, she learned to count money back to the customers and use the old-fashioned cash register.

When children came in for bread or milk, Judy wrote up a charge ticket and put it on a spindle. Township relief orders, county jail orders—



Ritchhart's Grocery, at 468 Eighth. Prices were hand-written on the cans. Lincoln: A Pictorial History.

those tickets also went into their own place in the McCaskey file.

Sometimes people would have hard luck, Judy remembers, so they would come in and pay half their bill. Mr. Ritchhart trusted them, "but you had to earn that trust."

Although Ritchhart's had a couple of shopping carts when Judy worked there, most people either picked up a little box in the back and filled it or just lay their purchases on the counter.

Mr. Ritchhart taught his kids how to cut up the long pork loins and quarters of beef. Jean Ritchhart Berglin says that skill came in handy once when her dad was sick in bed and her mother called to ask if she could come and help cut up the beef.

"I'll try," she replied, and sure enough, they got it all cut up.

Her dad would stand his kids on a wooden box so they could help him make ground beef, says Janet "Pete" Ritchhart Luckhart Smiley. (It was ground round when Judy came along.)

He made his own headcheese, too. Headcheese, cigars in a glass case, little drawstring bags of Bull Durham tobacco for rolling in cigarette paper, and mountain oysters—they're all items that were once available at Ritchhart's grocery store that are rare today.

Heinzel Super Market

Jim Heinzel became a grocer in 1932. His father, Henry, a concrete contractor, had built a little store for a relative at 610 Keokuk in Lincoln. When the deal fell through, he said to his son, "Jim, you're going to go into the grocery business."

In 1933, Jim married Charlotte Tate, and they moved into the apartment above the store, later moving to a brown-shingled house on Logan Street.

Charlotte's sister Connie Tate came from Tuscola every summer during high school to clerk at the store.

That's where she met and married Bernard "Bing" McCullough, who became one of the butchers.

In later years, when Jim bought a donut machine and set Connie to work running it, he said, "Any cull that you don't make right, we'll eat."

"We did a lot of eating," says Connie, "because there were a lot of mistakes. Maybe I did it on purpose."

Jim's older daughters, Susan and Nancy, both worked at the store on Saturdays. (His daughter Sally was too young; his son, Lindsey, wasn't born yet.) Connie says that the customers were family, too. "They were interested in your life," she says.

Ann Hickey was the cashier. Once a week, after totaling up the proceeds for the day, Jim would tell her, "Take ten dollars out and put it in a paper sack under the counter."

After several weeks, she would say, "Jim, I have all this money. What am I going to do with it?" And he'd take it down and put it in the savings.

Other long-time employees were butcher Willard Dowdel, Les Williamson, and Vince Warnisher.

Jim always joked that he was a good influence on young folks like Warren Peters and "Bud" McCullough, who worked at Heinzel's during high school and later became lawyers.

The friendly little store next to Lee's Cafe grew after George and Willard Bunn, wholesalers from Springfield who called on Jim, loaned him \$6,000 interest-free so he and his dad could build on an addition.

Sally Heinzel Brackney says that her dad always felt that his claim to fame was being the first in Lincoln to get grocery carts. "Women came in and they would stand back," Sally says, "and Dad would have to say, 'Just take the cart and push it through the store, and you won't have to carry anything.'"

Heinzel's did a big delivery service in the thirties and forties to the Hotel Lincoln, the Mill, and other restaurants. In 1956, Jim sold out, and the family moved to their farm. ■

A Day in the Life of a Grocer

After a busy Saturday night in the thirties, the A & P store next door to Feldman's gift shop in Lincoln closed at 10:00. But grocery clerk Gordon Ireland still had to take everything out of the display window, wash the glass, and put out the display and window signs for Monday morning.

Such a window might hold a hanging stalk of bananas, like the ones Herb Alexander's dad bought from Nelson and Finch produce house. "Green as grass" when they arrived by freight car, says Herb, they were ripened by gas at the produce house's ripening room near the Lincoln Theatre (later the Coca-Cola bottling company building).

Meanwhile, in the A & P store, with its tin ceiling and rotating fans and its scrubbed and oiled wood floor, there were no ten-minute breaks like the ones people take today, says Gordon.

Already, when he got to work in the morning, the boxes of bread and rolls would be sitting in front of the door, ready to be put on racks.

When the store opened and Mrs. Jones came in, she didn't get her own groceries, as she would today. No, she handed her list to Gordon, and the apron-clad clerk went down the aisles, picking up what she needed.

If she asked for potatoes, he made a trip to the back room, where he dumped out a bag on the floor and used a little metal scoop to scoop the potatoes into paper bags: 15 pounds to a peck.

A gallon of vinegar came out of one big barrel, a pound of beans from another. Eight O'Clock coffee was 39 cents for a three-pound bag. Bulk tea was stored under the counter, where the coffee mill stood, and even cookies were sold in bulk. If Mrs. Jones asked for a quarter's worth of mixed cookies (perhaps chocolate and filled), Gordon would pull them out

one by one, and weigh them for her.

A request for cereal meant Gordon was in for a little stretching. The limited selection—oatmeal and corn flakes and perhaps even Wheaties—was kept on a top shelf, so Gordon had to use a rod with a hook to pull down a box.

Some items we take for granted today weren't carried much at grocery stores in the thirties. The A & P didn't carry meat when Gordon started there in 1935; people bought their meat at meat markets like Eckert's. Later, the store began to stock luncheon meat and cheese.

People bought most of their bread at bakeries, and Gordon didn't sell much milk. People had home delivery, so Milnot, the canned milk, was A & P's big seller.

As for oleomargarine, it was first sold in a plain square, looking like nothing so much as a pound of lard.

Later, it came in a plastic sack, with a separate little button of red coloring. Children usually got the job of breaking the button and squeezing the sack to mix the liquid with the oleo, turning it yellow and therefore more the color of butter.

The store held a number of hundred-pound bags, filled with chicken feed, oyster shells, and sugar and salt. (One farmer bought a ton of cattle feed—20 bags—which was delivered to his farm.)

A hundred-pound bag of sugar cost \$4.95 on sale; Gordon would wheel it out to the customer's car.

During those Depression days, peanut butter, at 19 cents for a two-pound jar, was a popular staple, as were beans.

Liquid soap was not yet available, and there were few, if any, powders, remembers Gordon. The store stocked P & G and Fels-Naptha bar soap, but the big seller was OK

soap—big yellowish-orange bars that sold six for a quarter and didn't have any wrappers.

"Maybe they'd want soap before you got your crackers," remembers Gordon, "and there you'd have soap on your hands, and you'd have to brush it off on your apron."

After Gordon figured out the amount of groceries by pencil on a paper sack, he'd ring it up on the cash register, and Mrs. Jones would have her "arms full of groceries" for ten or fifteen dollars. ■

Not Just Groceries

In small towns, grocery stores were more like old-fashioned general stores. When Louise Cherry Thomas was a child in the twenties and thirties, Cornland had two grocery stores: Delbert and Tommy Ford owned one, and Samuel and Emma Pharis owned the other.

In addition to groceries, the stores carried boots, work shoes, and work overalls for men; hardware items like stovepipe, nails, and bolts; fabric; and garden seed and onion sets. At Christmastime, Emma Pharis even set up a table of small gifts. The Pharis store had a soda fountain, and in later years, the Cornland post office was located in the Ford store.

In Lake Fork, Raymond Thomas remembers, the post office was in Harry and Sophie Piatt's grocery store. Tom Mileham ran the other grocery store.

Lake Fork was on the Illinois Central railroad, so if a farmer needed barbed wire, the grocers would order it in by rail. In later years, farmer and truck driver Bill Koehler stocked his grocery store with farm goods that he brought by truck from Lincoln.

In New Holland, Burchett's was a general store with china, rugs, and dry goods that finally only sold groceries. ■

Of Bakeries and Bakers

Charles Ey came to America from Germany in 1893, when he was 17. In 1904, he bought a bakery at 219 Washington Street in Mt. Pulaski (present site of the Vinegar Hill Tavern). In April of 1905, Mr. Ey baked a wedding cake and took it with him on the train to marry his sweetheart up north in Crystal Lake, Illinois. The Eys had five children; they all helped out in the bakery, and daughter Louise worked there until it closed.

In 1936, the bakery moved to the square (108 E. Cooke, present site of the Hilltop Styling Shop) where it operated until Charles Ey retired in 1953. Ey's bakery had a full line of baked goods: breads, yeast-raised items, coffeecakes, pastries, cookies, and cakes (including wedding cakes).

In the early years, Ey's shipped white bread in wooden crates by railway express to Lake Fork, Cornland, Chestnut, Latham, Hartsburg, and Emden. During World War II, the bakery was a popular stop for workers on their way to the munitions plant at Illiopolis. Patrons of Bertoni's restaurant in Mt. Pulaski ate sweet rolls and fruit bars from Ey's. Jelly-centered cookies were popular.

Every little kid who came into the bakery got a cookie, says Louise Ey, who claims that the best part of working in a bakery is "eating all the cookies you want." And the worst part? Getting up early. Her father went to work at 2:00 a.m. during the week and at 1:00 a.m. on Saturdays. Then, too "it was terribly hot," she remembers—and there was no air conditioning.

Ey's Bakery in Lincoln

In 1947, Louise's brothers Vincent "Cap" and Carl "Bill" bought Hauffe's Purity Bakery at 404 Broadway in Lincoln. Bill had been a baker in the service. Bill's wife, Mary Elizabeth, had attended the Wilton School of Decorating in Chicago, so "we had a foot in the door," says Cap, when it came to wedding cakes and petit fours for club meetings.

The old German families patronized bakeries, and a huge variety of coffee-cakes went out every weekend—standing orders for 75, with 400 to 500 sold in all. Ey's sold a variety of breads, pies, bismarks (or bismarcks), sweet rolls, donuts, cream puffs, and chocolate éclairs. And cookies: sugar (always a great seller), ginger, peanut butter, chocolate chip, honey, black walnut bars, jelly-

centered, fruit bars—"the same ones my father made," says Cap.

Ey's baked fruitcakes and Christmas cookies, and a faithful group always came on Ash Wednesday morning to buy the first hot cross buns of Lent.

"We processed everything ourselves," says Cap: mixing the dough, piecing it, cutting it up, and putting it in the pans. Mary Elizabeth managed the sales room, and faithful employees included Mary Rose, Dorothy Tumilty, and Betty Burgher.

Ey's baked the breadsticks Lou Johnson served in glasses on each table at The Tropics—often 90 dozen a week.

The bakery had lots of early morning traffic. At noon, kids came "chasing up from Central School and the high school," says Cap, for brownies, cookies, rolls, and donuts.

Ey's was sold to John Jubelt in 1968.

Other Bakers

Other Lincoln bakeries have included the Busy "B", Devanny's, Lincoln Bakery, Comstock's, and the Corner Cakery.

As a little girl, Vickie Hum baked cookies with her grandmother Hilma Sanders. Vickie's mother, Elinor, took orders at her Cinderella Beauty Salon. At \$3.00 for a shoebox of iced, decorated cookies, "they did get a bargain," says Vickie.

Marylyn Lolling has come to the farmers' market since the eighties. Her daughter Diana (Hinch) used to help her; now her grandchildren do.

Marilyn used to make ten angel food cakes from scratch twice a week and completely fill the camper top of her pickup with baked goods. She has baked 225 dozen cookies at Christmastime—including iced Santa Claus faces and Xmas trees. Making everything from noodles to rhubarb bread to crescent rolls to wedding cakes—and all from scratch—keeps her three stoves hot and her two freezers and three refrigerators humming. ■



Charles Ey (left) and his brother-in-law Fred Von der Heide bake bread in the brick oven on Washington Street. Courtesy Louise Ey.

Fruits and Veggies—and Eggs

When Bill Klemm stopped at Mrs. Lowrie's house with his horse and wagon of produce in the early 1900s, she bought a nickel's worth of mixed peas and beans.

"That was enough for her dinner," remembers Faye Klemm, who still lives on 21st Street, where her father-in-law had tended his twenty acres of cherry, peach, and apple trees, and his fruit and vegetable garden.

Bill also took produce to his brother Frank's grocery store at 418 Monroe.

In later years, the Pangerl brothers raised fruits and vegetables in North Lincoln and sold them all over town. Clarence Landers had an open-air market at 705 Keokuk; Vince Boughan (and sons) had one in the 400 block of Pulaski Street.

Julius Kasa

Since 1977, the truck garden tradition has been alive and well on Julius Kasa's 35-acre farm on Route 10 just east of Lincoln.

Growing up near the Springfield fairgrounds in the thirties, Julius watched

his dad compete with his produce at the Illinois State Fair. He grew ten or eleven kinds of pears and won the Governor's Basket one year. While a student at Lanphier High, Julius was impressed with the tomatoes the vocational ag instructor, Cassius Armstrong, grew and sold to Springfield restaurants.

"Man, why can't I grow them like that?" he used to think.

Julius became a teacher and spent his summers trying for that perfect tomato, finally harvesting a bumper crop on his uncle's land in 1966. There's never been another crop like that one, but last year's tomato crop on his own farm was "tremendous," says Julius. "We have such good soil and such good-tasting stuff, that people come here from other states, and the first thing they want to do is taste the tomatoes and corn of our area," he says.

The first year Julius sold his produce to the public, it was from a pup tent on his farm. Then he built the present little white building, where one year he sold 17,000 ears of sweet corn in six days—all picked by hand.

The best melon crop Julius remembers grew during the drought year of 1988. "The sweet corn was a failure, the garden was a failure, and the melons were wonderful," he says.

Julius supplements his crops with produce purchased at wholesale markets in St. Louis, Chicago, or Michigan—wherever he feels he can find the best. He waits on every customer himself but has had wonderful help on the farm. He credits Cassius Armstrong, Norman Schuler (who found the farm and encouraged him to buy it), and his neighbor Wilman Wilmert (who helped with the farming) with helping him turn his dream of a roadside stand into a reality.

Adolph Hum

"You want to have a variety, girl," advises Adolph Hum. "What sells today, won't sell next Saturday."

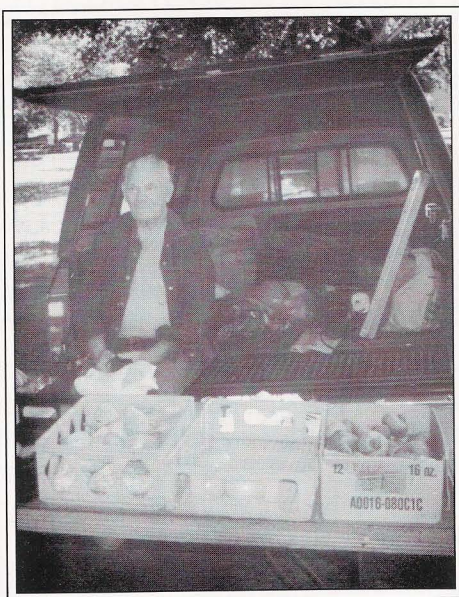
He's talking about the farmers' market in Lincoln's Latham Park, where he brings his produce on Wednesday and Saturday mornings during the summer.

This isn't the first farmers' market. The Logan County Farm Bureau Producers' Market, with 26 booths, opened in October of 1923 at 408 Broadway (next to the Farm Bureau office). Saturdays, farmers and their wives sold everything from eggs, cream, dressed chickens and sausage, to canned fruits and coffee-cakes. The market moved with the Farm Bureau—to the Arcade, then to the Farm Bureau building at 120-24 S. McLean.

Adolph's been coming to the present market since the sixties. Over the years, he's learned a lot about produce—the tomatoes, beets, potatoes, onions, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, and peaches he raises on his farm south of Lincoln off Primm Road, and the fruits and vegetables he buys from other local growers and from Humphrey's Market in Springfield. Southern Illinois peaches, for example. The same peaches can grow other places, but they won't be as good as the ones from Southern Illinois, he says.

Adolph's full of such hints, which he shares from his perch on the tailgate of his truck. His daughter Vickie Hum, who helps him, says her dad would probably say socializing is the best part of his job. "He's the PR man," she says. It's true he seems to always have an old friend sitting on the tailgate beside him.

Today it's Willard Aughton. When Willard gets up to make his purchase, Adolph tells Vickie to "knock something off, because he's going to make me some of that white peach butter." Sounds like a pretty good deal. ■



Adolph Hum at the farmers' market in Latham Park in Lincoln. Courtesy Nancy Gehlbach.

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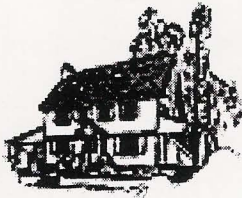
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“It’s the greatest thing since sliced bread.”

How often have we heard someone use that expression and wondered if the introduction of sliced bread was really all that great? To Ruth Robertson Musick, it was “the best thing that ever happened.” Being able to buy bread had relieved her mother of baking her own, and having it pre-sliced was even better.

For a farm wife like Ruth’s mother, baking meant firing up the gray Home Comfort stove—starting the fire in the firebox with corncobs, then adding coal or wood. When she put her hand in the oven and it felt hot enough, she could bake.

Baking time was a guess. The cook checked to see how the bread was browning and stuck a broom straw in a cake to see if it came out clean. If the oven wasn’t hot enough, she threw in a few more cobs. When cooking on top of the stove, she could use a handle to lift off a burner cover and add fuel underneath. If she wanted something to simmer, she set it on a back burner and let the fire go down.

Ruth’s mother spent a lot of time with her range—baking two pies before breakfast every morning and canning fruits and vegetables all summer long. Ruth says it took all of a hot summer day to pick the peas, haul them to the house in five-gallon milk cans, shell them, and can them in the pressure cooker (following the directions in the Kerr book).

Her mother kept 1,000 chickens and milked seven cows, separating out the cream and churning her own butter. She made sauerkraut by slicing cabbage and placing it in a stone crock with a lid—with enough salt to float an egg. She made pickles and put lye on corn kernels for hominy, beat egg whites by hand for angel food cakes, and kept oatmeal-raisin cookies in the cookie jar for the family and the two hired men. And all this without electricity.

City women did their share of cooking, too. The *Courier* held cooking schools at Lincoln’s Grand Theater for a number of years. In 1929, an average of 800 city and country women per day attended the three-day school. ■

Our Times

**The People, History, and Culture of
Logan County, Illinois**

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**“It’s the greatest thing since
sliced bread.”**

Material in this issue came from *History of Logan County Illinois 1982*; *Mt. Pulaski 1836-1986*; the *Courier* under its various names; Lincoln city directories and telephone books; and the terrific memories of our friends.

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