

Peddle Wagons Were Rolling General Store

(Editor's Note: Following is the fourth article in a series on the early history of Industry. The articles are being prepared by the Industry-West End Historical Society.)

Customers have not always come to the general store to buy goods. During an era, the store came to the farmer. Beginning in the 1860's until some time in the 1920's, the form of selling known as the peddle wagon was very significant. Difficult road conditions for the customer during bad weather made the peddle wagon a very successful system of doing business. The peddle wagon was multi-purpose in that the farm family was not quite so isolated. News, as well as goods, travelled through the area via the travelling vendor. This is why the peddle wagon was usually a welcome, even anticipated sight on the county roads.

The peddle wagon used a type of barter system whereby goods were traded for goods. Customers bought staples such as flour, rice, coffee, and sugar. In return, goods such as eggs and chickens were traded. One of the peddle wagons in the town of Industry was operated by the Lindemann Store.

The route used by the wagon was similar to a mail carrier's route. The same routes were followed weekly or bi-weekly. People could depend that on a set day and usually a specific time the wagon would come by their home. The routes went every major direction out of Industry.

The experiences were many and varied. Some of the people would fix dinner for the driver because they knew when he would be at their home. One story told how the driver would make a special effort to arrive at a particular farm home at noontime because he could depend

on the dinner spread looking like a "wedding feast." Edmund Buechmann, who drove the peddle wagon for the Lindemann Store, has told his son that many times eggs picked up during the day would be baby chicks when the wagon was unloaded in the evening.

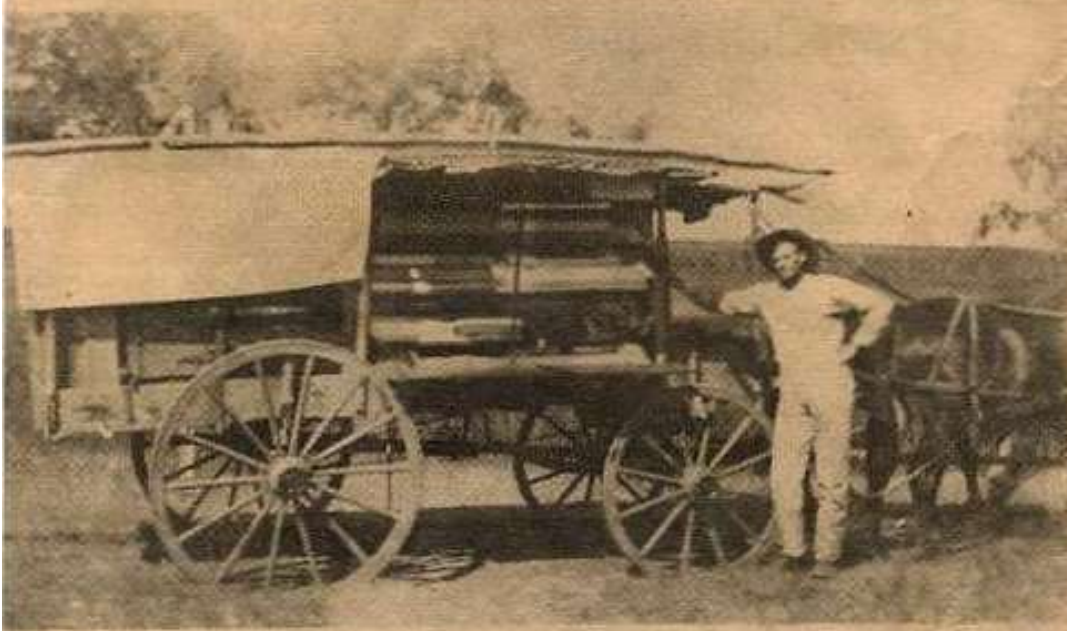
A typical peddle wagon had panels which folded down to display the wares and then folded up to protect the goods from the dust and rain. As described, the front area on one side of the wagon contained items of dry goods such as drees material, lace, ribbons, thread, thimbles, pins, and needles. As the sides were folded down, the items were displayed better. Cloth could be cut into desired lengths. The other side of the wagon contained the staple items mentioned earlier. These items were sold in one pound bags which had been filled the night before. The rear part of the wagon was allocated for the produce bought at the farm, such as eggs, cream, butter, chickens, and turkeys.

Each night when the wagon returned from the day's route, the driver would be in charge of unloading and replenishing the wagon. This preparation assured the driver of an early departure for the next morning's route.

One of the considerations of the wagon was that horses and mules were needed to pull the wagon. Four animals were usually used. The animals had to be fed and cared for, which added to the burden of operating this mode of selling.

Road conditions were factors that had to be given particular attention. Drivers of the peddle wagon made many miles over mud laden paths. Often the road was a public right-of-way through different farmers' property and fields. Care had to be taken to keep entries open or shut,

the equivalent of opening and shutting gates on private property. Even though the right-of-ways were publicly used, no maintenance crews were on hand to make improvements. It was therefore important to practice the "do unto others" rule to keep the roads passable and in good condition. One story told how very cautious the peddle wagon driver treated a rain soaked farmer's yard in order not to create deep ruts. He would make extra distance on foot to do business so as not to create a problem in the farmer's yard. This courtesy was probably appreciated by both the customers as well as the driver in that the extra time spent during poor weather conditions meant better conditions year round. When extremely bad weather existed, the route would have to be cancelled, but like the pony express, every possible effort was made to get through. Many people depended on this faithful peddler, and it was said a person could set a clock by the



PEDDLE WAGON - This photo, believed taken in the early 1900's shows the peddle wagon belonging to Lindemann's Store and its driver, Eugene Simmank.

dependable service. With the advent of cars and trucks, which, in turn, brought about better maintenance of roads, the business of the peddle wagon came to a close.

Some entries from a ledger

prepared by Otto G. Kautz in 1905 and his dealings with the peddle wagon of F. B. Miller were as follows:

	DR.	CR.
Jan. 7 3-1/2 doz. eggs \$.45; 4 Hens \$.80		1.25
Jan. 7 Embroidery Cotton \$.10; Thread \$.65	.15	
Jan. 7 Flannel \$.40; Knit Yarn \$.25	.65	
Jan. 7 Baking Powder \$.10	.10	
Jan. 15 2-1/4 doz. eggs \$.40		.40
Jan. 15 Domestic \$1.10; Thread \$.20	1.30	
Jan. 21 Bacon		3.30
Jan. 28 Eggs \$.54; Bacon \$3.20	3.54	
Jan. 28 Seed \$.05	.05	
Jan. 30 1-1/2 Doz. eggs \$.27; 2 Chicks \$.45		.72
Jan. 30 Potatoes	.50	
Jan. 30 Domestic \$.15; Seeds \$.15	.35	
Feb. 9 7 Doz. Eggs \$1.40		1.40
Feb. 9 Envelopes \$.65; Seed \$.10; Turpentine \$.10	.85	