

## STORES AND TRADE.

A great inconvenience incident to pioneer life, is the want of the many articles essential to the comfort of a family, which the farm cannot supply. Therefore no immigrant is more welcome in a new settlement than the first merchant. Fortunately, there are seldom wanting those who are ready to establish a store when and where there is a population sufficient to sustain one. All the early stores were kept in log buildings. The first stocks of goods were small, yet they comprised most of those articles which were needed by the settlers.

But the gratification of some at the advent of the early merchant, was greatly moderated by their inability to purchase his wares. The inhabitants generally were poor. They had expended nearly all their money in their removal; and the little they had left was wanted to buy absolute necessities. Farmers who had been here long enough to raise a small surplus, obtained some money from new comers. But the majority were not so fortunate.

Goods were dear, having been transported, at great cost. They were first brought from Carlisle and Chambersburg, and sometimes four weeks were occupied in the round trip. After wagons were introduced, the round trip was usually made in about ten days, though on many occasions, double that time was used. But the high price of the merchant's goods was but half of the farmers' misfortune. While he had to pay a double price for nearly every article of store goods, he, much of the time, was obliged to sell the products of his farm at about half the cost in labor. Wheat sometimes sold as low as a shilling per bushel; corn, 6d per bushel; rye, 1s; buckwheat, 1s; oats, 6d per bushel; tallow, 2 cts. per pound; lard, 2 cts. per pound; pork, 4s per cwt.; beef, 1 to 2d per pound, and other products in proportion. Oft times the prices were double and even five times the foregoing, but the market as a rule was "weak and no buyers."

The earliest account book which we have been enabled to see, bears the date of 1794,\* but as this only gives the aggregate amounts, the retail price cannot be gleaned. The old mode of reckoning was by pounds, shillings and pence, and until a comparatively late period, the prices of goods per yard or pound, both in buying and selling, at wholesale and retail, were given in shillings and pence. Between 1794 and 1800 some of the prices are: "Wool hat, 11s 3d; (1794) bandana handkf. 11s 3d; half a pound cut and dry tobacco, 1s 6d; (1795) 1 skillet, 12s; half a pound of lead, 11 ¼ d; one-fourth bushel of salt, 6s 6 ½ d; 8 ½ pounds of bacon, 8s 6d; pound of coffee, 3s 9d; 1 pair *mockisins*, 3s 9d; half a quire of paper, 1s 6d; two pipes, 11d; one-fourth pound of tobacco, 9d; half a bushel of potatoes, 3s 9d; half a pound of gun powder, 5s 7 ½ d; two yards calico, 7s; one pound lead, 1s 10 ½ d; one pair boots, 2£ 16s 3d; one-fourth yd. *Corderoy*, 4s 9 ½ d; one-half a dozen knives and forks (1798), 12s 6d; two pounds soap, 2s 10 ½ d; five tin cups, 4s 8d; five yards *Durant* (?), 1£ 2s 6d; one peck salt, 7s 6d; one crooked comb, 1s 10 ½ d; (1794) one pen knife, 3s 6d; three-fourths yard *Mersailles* pattern, 14s ½ d; two and one-half yards muslin, 9s 4 ½ d; one yard muslin, 3s 9d; three and a half yards binding, 1s 7d; one and a fourth yards calico, 9s 4 ½ d; one ounce indigo, 1s 6d; forty-seven pounds of iron, 1£ 19s 2d; one pair leggings, 7s 9d; One quart whisky, 1s 10 ½ d; one pair cotton cords, 7s 6d; one-half a dozen spoons, 10s 1 ½ d; one pair *Rose Blankets*, 2£ 12s 6d; one pair cotton hose, 15s; one quire paper, 3s; one mill saw file, 5s; one blanket, 19s 9d; one gimblet, 4s; two dozen screws, 1s 10 ½ d; two hundred tacks, 3s 9d; two pounds coffee, 8s; one ounce indigo, 1s 6d; one-fourth pound (1796) pepper, 2s; four *skanes* thread, 1s; five yards ribbon, 7s 6d; nails one pound, 3s; one nutmeg, 1s; factory muslin, one yard, 6s; Maccaboy snuff, one pound, 13s; three sticks twist, 3s; one pair shoes, 15s, one dozen buttons, 3s; one razor, 2s 6d; (1789) one yard scarlet cloth, 3s 6d; one-half a hundred quills, 8s; three yards *Furstin* (1797), 16s 9d; one yard swanskin, 7s 7 ½ d; one-half a pound of lead, 1s; one quart salt, 1s 10 ½ d; one paper of pins, (1798), 3s; one pair *sisars* (1798) 4s 9d." Whisky, that staple article in those days, varied in price from 6 to 15s per gallon, but the books indicated no perceptible decrease in its consumption. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 1798, Charles Campbell is credited with 1 barrel of salt, 7£ 10s.

But our surprise at these prices will be less when we consider the cost of transportation. With the products of their farms, at the prices they bore a few years later, farmers could hardly have paid for store goods, at the prices charged. Nor did farmers find permanent relief until the commencement of the canal and development of the furnace business.

In those early days, whisky was the article whose sale was never diminished on account of hard times. In 1797, we count, on five successive pages, sixty-nine separate and distinct charges for this article. During the war of 1812, flour rose to \$19 per barrel; hollow castings ten cents per pound, and salt \$12 per barrel.

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\* Johnson's, of Point Pleasant, opposite present site of Saltsburg.

Maple sugar was exchanged at six cents per pound for goods; butter at six to eight cents; oats, ten to twelve cents per bushel; and other products in proportion.

To facilitate the collection of debts, merchants, after cattle were plenty, received the same in payment from their customers and drove them to eastern markets, or sold them to drovers from the East. Pork also was taken on account at prices which contrast strikingly with the present. Well fatted pork, dressed, was sold for two dollars per hundred pounds. Lumber with its products, lath, shingles, &c., were received, and other things, such as furs, &c.

#### NATURE OF TRADE.

From what has been said in the previous paragraphs, the reader will readily infer that trade was greatly restricted by the scarcity of the usual circulating medium. Few goods were sold for cash. Business was done on the credit and barter system, not only by and with merchants, but between the people. Notes were made payable in grain, lumber, cattle, furs, &c., and sometimes contained the stipulation, "at cash prices." Almost everything had a cash and a barter, or a credit price. It was, however, not always easy to ascertain the cash price. Merchants often suffered great loss on grain and other commodities, which it was almost impossible to sell for cash, rendered the business an unsafe one.

Most of the business was, for many years, transacted in the river towns, which were first settled, and possessed superior commercial advantages. Maple sugar, long an important article of trade, came in large quantities from the settlements. The inhabitants generally supplying themselves, the price is said to have been, at times, as low as four cents per pound. Almost the only store sugar for years, was the white, refined, put up in hard ball, solid loaves, of a conical form, and called loaf or lump sugar, and was wrapped in strong and coarse paper. It was sold chiefly for sweetening medicines and the liquors of tavern keepers.